Rugby League Regal Trophy final

Young, gifted and full of promise

Paul Fitzpatrick in Huddersfield

JOHN JOYNER, the Castleford coach, aired his doubts last week about the effect that the 10-metre rule is having upon the game. He is concerned that the additional freedom now enjoyed by the players is leading to a devaluation of the try, the game's hard currency. Too many matches are producing too many points.

Saturday's Regal Trophy final at Huddersfield, which Wigan won 25-16 against St Helens, provided a timely retort to Joyner's argument. If the 10-metre rule can produce games as compelling as this, there cannot be much wrong with it.

With the advent of Super League in March, there is no saying where, if at all, the Regal Trophy will fit into the scheme of things. But if this was the end, it was a sunset of the richest colours. It also held the promise of a bright dawn. St Helens showed here, with a side heavily dependent on men in their teens and early twenties, that they are not too far short of Wigan's standards. Graeme West, the Wigan coach, welcomed that.

One of Saints' youngsters, the 19-year-old hooker Keiron Cunningham, took the Man of the Match award and two others, the winger Joey Hayes and full-back Steve Prescott, must have run him close.

Anthony Sullivan at 27 and Vila Matautia and Apollo Perelini at 26 were the oldest members of Saturday's side, an indication of the rich potential available to the club's coach, Eric Hughes.

It might have been fulfilled here if Sullivan, Paul Newlove and Chris Joynt had not gone into the game cold. Because of injury, Joynt had not played since December 13, and Newlove and Sullivan since December 20. Their lack of match practice was not glaringly apparent but all three have played better.

Saints found a variety of ways of punishing themselves and found that, as usual, mistakes made against Wigan carry a heavy price. One of their costliest errors came from Scott Gibbs soon after the interval when, with most of his body in his own in-goal area, he let the ball slip from his left hand.

Kris Radlinski was on hand to accept the gift, Henry Paul added the inevitable goal points and from an 8-6 interval deficit Wigan went 12-8 up and were never again headed.

What with that and his late dismissal for using his elbow on Simon Haughton, it was a mixed afternoon for Gibbs, who otherwise had an outstanding game.

There was no argument, though, about the chief architect of Wigan's victory. Had the Man of the Match votes been collected at the end of the game, the award would almost certainly have gone to the 21-year-old Kiwi stand-off, Henry Paul.



Peerless Wigan . . . celebrations begin as the Lancastrians record another Regal Trophy triumph

He seems to be made of springs and rubber and he is a nightmare to pin down. Newlove, Bobby Goulding and Prescott all made unavailing attempts to nail this whirling bundle of energy in the 52nd minute. He weaved through again in injury time, to end with 16 points.

Saints' best spell came after Tuigamala's opening try in the 15th minute. For eight minutes they were touched by magic and deserved their tries from Hayes and Newlove.

Cunningham got a third in the 71st minute and Wigan, at 19-16, led by only three points. But Saints could not find the extra energy to outwit their opponents' defence again and Paul's late try gave Wigan the trophy for the eighth time in nine final appearances.

Football results and league tables

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Bolton 1, Wimbledon 0; Coventry 0, Newcastle 1; Everton 1, Chelsea 1; Leeds 2, West Ham 0, Man Utd 0, Aston Villa 0; Middlesbrough 2, Arsenal 3; Nottm Forest 1, Southampton 0; QPR 0, Blackburn 1; Sheffield Wed 1, Liverpool 1; Tottenham 1, Man City 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Newcastle	22	16	3	3	43	18	51
Man Utd	23	12	6	5	41	27	42
Tottenham	23	11	8	4	32	22	41
Liverpool	22	11	6	5	41	21	39
Arsenal	23	10	7	6	31	22	37
Nottm Forest	22	9	10	3	33	31	37
Aston Villa	21	10	6	5	27	15	36
Blackburn	23	10	5	8	34	20	35
Leeds	22	10	5	7	30	27	35
Everton	23	9	6	8	33	25	33
Middlesbrough	23	9	6	8	25	24	33
Chelsea	23	8	9	6	24	25	33
Sheff Wed	22	6	8	8	33	33	26
West Ham	21	6	5	10	22	32	23
Wimbledon	23	5	6	12	31	45	21
Southampton	22	4	8	10	20	32	20
Coventry	22	4	7	11	28	44	19
Man City	22	5	4	13	12	32	19
QPR	23	5	3	15	17	34	18
Bolton	23	3	4	16	22	44	13

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE: First Division: Birmingham 3, Charlton 4; C Palace 1, Ipswich 1; Derby 3, Reading 0; Luton 3, Southend 1; Millwall 1, Port Vale 2; Oldham 0, Barnsley 1. Portsmouth 3, Grimsby 1; Stoke 1, Leicester 0; Sunderland 0, Norwich 1; Tranmere 1, Sheff Utd 1; Watford 0, Huddersfield 1; West Brom 0, Wolverhampton 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Derby	26	14	7	5	44	20	49
Charlton	25	11	9	5	35	27	42
Huddersfield	27	11	8	8	37	32	41
Stoke	26	10	9	7	37	32	39
Leicester	25	10	8	7	40	36	38
Norwich	27	10	8	9	30	33	38
Birmingham	25	10	8	7	37	34	38
Sunderland	23	10	8	5	30	20	38
Southend	26	10	8	8	29	31	38
Grimsby	25	9	10	6	31	30	37
Barnsley	26	9	9	8	34	41	36
Millwall	26	9	9	8	27	32	36
Ipswich	25	8	10	7	45	37	34
Tranmere	24	9	7	8	35	27	34
Crystal Palace	24	8	9	7	31	32	33
Portsmouth	27	8	8	11	43	44	32
Oldham	25	7	10	8	34	29	31
Port Vale	26	7	8	11	32	39	29
Reading	25	6	10	9	31	36	28
Wolverhampton	25	5	10	10	30	35	25
West Brom	25	7	4	14	28	41	25
Watford	24	5	9	10	27	31	24
Sheff Utd	25	5	7	13	32	44	22
Luton	24	5	7	12	22	37	22

Second Division: Bradford C 1, Brighton 3; Bristol C 3, Crewe 2; Burnley 4, Stockport 3; Carlisle 1, Chesterfield 1; Hull 1, Rotherham 4; Oxford Utd 2, Brentford 1; Peterborough 4, Bournemouth 5; Swansea 2, Bristol Rovers 2; Walsall 3, Shrewsbury 0; Wrexham 1, Blackpool 1; Wycombe 1, Notts Co 1; York 2, Swindon 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Swindon	24	13	8	3	39	17	47
Crewe	23	13	5	5	44	26	44
Blackpool	23	11	7	5	35	24	40
Notts County	22	11	7	4	34	19	40
Burnley	23	10	8	5	39	30	38
Chesterfield	23	10	7	6	35	25	37
Bradford	24	11	4	9	35	37	37
Shrewsbury	25	11	4	10	34	33	37
Wrexham	23	8	11	4	35	26	35
Wycombe	23	8	11	4	31	23	35
Bournemouth	25	10	5	10	30	35	35
Oxford Utd	23	9	7	7	31	24	34
Stockport	25	8	9	8	32	28	33
Walsall	23	8	8	7	27	18	32
Bristol Rovers	24	8	7	9	27	35	31
Bristol City	24	7	9	8	25	32	30
Peterborough	23	6	8	9	32	37	26
Rotherham	24	6	7	11	29	39	25
York	23	7	4	12	27	37	25
Carlisle	25	5	9	11	30	39	24
Brighton	24	6	4	14	22	38	22
Swansea	24	4	9	11	24	41	21
Brentford	23	5	6	12	19	31	21
Hull	23	2	8	13	18	40	14

Third Division: Chester 1, Bury 1; Colchester 3, Barnet 2, Doncaster 1, Torquay 0, Fulham 1, Scarborough 0, Gillingham 2, Lincoln 0, Hereford 5, Cambridge Utd 2, Leyton Orient 1, Mansfield 0; Northampton 1, Cardiff 0; Preston 3, Plymouth 2; Rochdale 1, Darlington 2, Scunthorpe 3, Wigan 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gillingham	24	14	7	3	32	8	49
Preston	24	11	11	2	51	23	44
Chester	25	12	8	5	43	29	44
Colchester	24	10	9	5	37	29	39
Plymouth	24	10	7	7	39	28	37
Bury	24	9	9	6	29	30	36
Darlington	23	9	9	5	26	22	36
Doncaster	23	10	5	8	27	31	35
Cambridge Utd	24	9	6	9	38	41	33
Rochdale	23	9	6	9	34	28	32
Wigan	24	8	8	8	31	31	32
Northampton	24	8	7	9	27	25	31
Leyton Orient	25	8	7	10	25	33	31
Exeter	25	6	12	7	27	30	30
Barnet	25	6	12	7	28	29	30
Hereford	23	6	10	7	32	29	28
Scunthorpe	22	6	8	8	31	29	26
Fulham	23	5	11	7	29	32	26
Hartlepool	23	6	8	9	24	33	26
Cardiff	25	6	8	11	23	30	26
Scarborough	24	5	10	9	20	34	25
Mansfield	24	4	12	8	31	43	24
Lincoln	23	5	7	11	23	38	22
Torquay	24	2	8	14	20	46	14

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: Aberdeen 1, Celtic 2; Hearts 2, Falkirk 1; Kilmarnock 3, Hibernian 2; Motherwell 0, Partick 2; Rangers 4, Raith 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	23	17	5	1	55	10	56
Celtic	22	15	6	1	41	17	51
Hearts	22	9	4	9	33	35	31
Hibernian	22	9	4	9	33	40	31
Aberdeen	20	9	2	9	31	25	29
Raith	21	7	5	9	24	33	26
Kilmarnock	21	6	4	11	27	38	22
Partick	21	5	4	12	15	33	19
Falkirk	21	5	3	13	18	34	18
Motherwell	21	2	9	10	13	27	15

First Division: Dumbarton 1, Airdrie 2; Dundee Utd 2, St Mirren 1; Dunfermline 4, Clydebank 3; Greenock Morton 1, Dundee 0; Hamilton 2, St Johnstone 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Dundee Utd (played 23, points 43); 2, Dunfermline (20-40); 3, Greenock Morton (20-36).

Second Division: Clyde 3, Stenhousemuir 0; Montrose 0, Ayr 1; Stranraer 2, Stirling 2. **Leading positions:** 1, East Fife (18-42); 2, Stirling (19-37); 3, Berwick (18-31).

Third Division: Alloa 0, Caledonian T 2; Arbroath 2, East Stirling 1; Livingston 0, Albion 1; Queen's Park 0, Brechin 0; Ross County 4, Cowdenbeath 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Livingston (19-37); 2, Ross County (20-33); 3, Brechin (19-33).

TENNENTS SCOTTISH CUP: Second-round replays: Annan Ath 1, Berwick 2; East Fife 2, Spartans 1; Fraserburgh 1, Whitehill Welf 2; Keith 2, Deveronvale 0.

Cryptic crossword by Quantum

Across

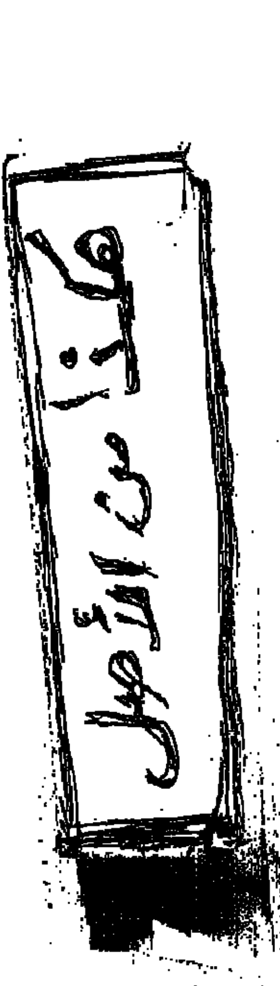
1 One of the game that's no hard worker (7)
5 Cathedral assembly getting division of work (7)
10 Row not right: it makes one hot and bothered (4)
11 Builder could make an indiscreet remark (4,1,5)
12 Sort of system a student follows after long row (6)
13 Fool to run out with information that's merely gas? (8)
14 Worked round jade that's broken off (9)
16 Group tutorial? (5)
17 Critics initially at start of play? They're prickly (5)
19 Involved tiff I'd end, being restrained (9)
23 Me a lilac? Not exactly (8)
24 Unpractical DIY with a lot of paper for one (6)
26 Gather bishops included a line to go back to rep overseas (10)
27 It's dreadful when only half controlled (4)
28 Dodgers are involved with them in a game (7)
29 I need to be kept off meat if upset's to depart quickly (7)

Down

2 Free-range thinker? (7)
3 Horse being guided losing half-rein (5)
4 Left around tangled with little knots (7)
6 Comrade at sea in good spirits (6)
7 Probed liar not quite cooked (but partly cooked) (9)
8 Avoids school, going in various directions (7)
9 Room monitors inactive among the top classes? (6,7)
15 Stressed cases should be in train (2,3,4)
18 State in which there is a low count (7)
20 States could be producing strong leader perhaps (7)
21 Workers under ground are left out of a number (7)
22 Shut top of the cupboard (6)
25 Intend own benefit (5)

Last week's solution

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France ends tests with mighty bang

Alex Duval Smith in Paris and Reuter

PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac announced the "definitive end" to France's nuclear testing programme on Monday night, implying that he had been swayed only by military data, not by six months of worldwide protests.

Twenty-four hours after the sixth and biggest nuclear explosion in the South Pacific, he said in a live television broadcast: "Thanks to the completion of the final series of tests, France will have at its disposal a durable weapon which is reliable and modern."

At the end of a six-month period in which France has suffered trade boycotts and been vilified by much of the world, Mr Chirac said: "Today I feel I have accomplished one of the prime callings of my office by giving France, for decades to come, the means to secure her safety and independence."

His decision to end testing now is believed to be linked to his visit to the United States this week. While John Major refused to condemn the tests, President Clinton had expressed regret.

The tests — which all exceeded the size of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs — soured links with France's closest neighbours, including Germany and Italy.

But France claimed that threats of boycotts — especially from Scandinavia and Germany — had rarely been carried through.

During the testing campaign at Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls, French naval vessels clashed with Greenpeace campaigners, confiscating their equipment and arresting crew members. As a result, no environmental campaigners were present for the final two tests,

The US hailed Mr Chirac's decision to halt nuclear testing and said it would give new momentum to efforts to reach a global test ban treaty.

Japan reacted with unusually blunt diplomatic language, saying the action was forced on Paris by international outrage. "It is deeply regrettable that France defied protests from Japan and the international community and conducted nuclear tests six times," the Japanese chief cabinet secretary, Seiroku Kajiyama, said.

Australia and New Zealand applauded the decision but issued damning verdicts on the tests. "The fact that he has announced their cessation is welcome, but they should never have been on in the first place," the Australian prime minister, Paul Keating, said.

Jim Bolger, the New Zealand prime minister, welcomed the announcement, but said that South Pacific countries would be wary of France for years.

"The Pacific will look at the French with a careful eye for some years to see whether or not there is anything else they're going to go back on," Mr Bolger said.

Meanwhile China said on Tuesday it would not halt its underground nuclear tests until a global test ban treaty takes effect, standing alone as the only country outside a global test moratorium.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Chen Jian, said: "The position of the Chinese government on nuclear testing is clear cut and remains unchanged. China has conducted a very limited number of nuclear tests and things will continue to be that way," he said.

Mr Chen reiterated China's support for international efforts to negotiate a comprehensive test ban treaty in 1996 and pledged to abide by such a pact — but only after it takes effect.

Comment, page 12
Le Monde, page 20



Troops of the People's Liberation Army show what they're made of to Hong Kong notables PHOTO: K Y CHENG

China calls with chants to *kill*

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

THRUSTING bayonets to chants of "kill, kill", the People's Liberation Army displayed its might to Hong Kong tycoons on Monday in the first encounter between the money and the muscle that will decide the territory's fate after 1997.

It was a curious start to what was billed as a drive to win the hearts and minds of a population disaffected by the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. The élite Red First Regiment of the PLA, due to be garrisoned in Hong Kong next year, engaged in noisy mock combat in the border boomtown of Shenzhen.

The multi-billionaire Li Ka-shing and other Hong Kong notables on the powerful Beijing-appointed preparatory committee for handover watched as a helicopter strafed a road and troops fired machine-guns, mortars and flame-throwers.

The pyrotechnics in Shenzhen, which dominated Hong Kong television news, coincided with a campaign by Beijing-funded media to calm unease about the intentions of the PLA troops who will raise the Chinese flag on July 1 next year.

"Hong Kong compatriots please put your hearts at ease," read a banner headline in Ta Kung Pao, a leading Communist party mouthpiece in the colony. Troops selected for duty in Hong Kong, the paper said, were well educated, often computer-literate, and mostly English-speaking.

The Red First Regiment traces its origins to the Autumn Harvest Uprising, Mao Zedong's bloody and bungled attempt to incite a peasant revolt in 1927.

No aspect of the transfer of sovereignty causes more anxiety than the role of the PLA, whose assault on Tiananmen Square in June 1989, brought hundreds of thousands on to the streets of Hong Kong in protest.

Martin Lee, leader of the Democratic party, the biggest group in the legislature that China vows to disband, said: "Chinese officials say the purpose of the troops . . . is to protect Hong Kong. The question is from whom?"

Taiwan threatened, page 3

Anger greets Major's call for Ulster poll

Patrick Wintour, Rebecca Smithers and David Sharrock

SINN FEIN president Gerry Adams was to meet the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, on Tuesday to discuss the British demand for elections to a negotiating body as the Government moves to reassure nationalists and the Irish government that the peace process is still on track.

His meeting with Sir Patrick will be the first between the two men since last week's publication of the Mitchell report, when nationalist parties condemned Mr Major for "binning" the main thrust of the report on arms decommissioning, and replacing it with another precondition for all-party talks.

The report by the three-man team, headed by former US senator George Mitchell, offered detailed proposals for gradual decommissioning in parallel with the elusive talks between all the parties. It would be underpinned by a six-point declaration of "total and absolute" commitment to democratic and peaceful means, plus total disarmament in the longer term.

Mr Major's proposals for elections came after the commission announced that the best way to break the deadlock on all-party talks would be for the Government to drop its demand for a start to IRA arms decommissioning as a precondition.

Mr Major told the Commons last week that, apart from a start to decommissioning, the only other way of persuading the Unionists to hold all-party talks was for elections in Northern Ireland so that Sinn Fein had a fresh electoral mandate.

But the SDLP leader, John Hume, said: "We want nothing to do with such elections . . . The electoral process he has proposed is not one we would want to take part in. It's only wasting time."

Mr Hume said it would be quicker to enter all-party talks in February on the previously agreed timetable set out by the Mitchell commission,

The SDLP fears that the Unionists would inevitably hold a majority and use the body to block progress on cross-border links.

John Bruton, the Irish prime minister, also lent his weight this week to efforts to repair the severely damaged Anglo-Irish relations.

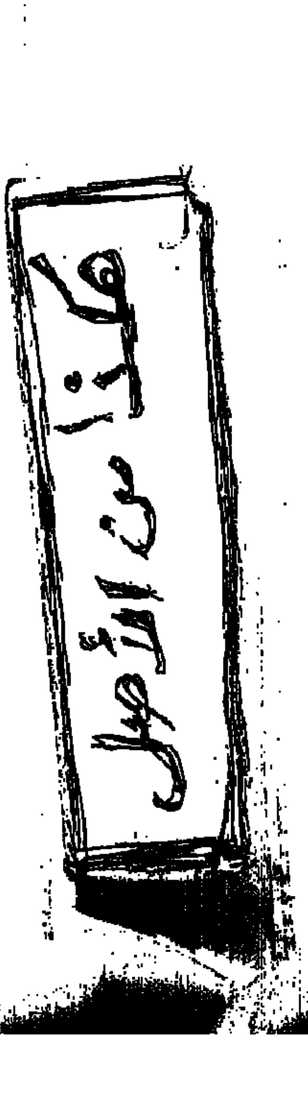
His comments follow a furious outburst by his deputy, Dick Spring, at the weekend. He had claimed Britain had been trying to drive a wedge in the Irish government coalition.

Using more conciliatory language, Mr Bruton said "people on all sides in Northern Ireland should be prepared to sit down with each other for constructive talks after 17 months of peace. I think the point Mr Spring was making was that we need to work together, and not to separate agendas — whatever the pressures may be."

He said that both governments still had a firm target date, some time this month, for all-party talks.

Irish hurdle race, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	[illegible]		



Complex Irish conflict as viewed from a bar stool

HUGO YOUNG'S article on the Irish situation (January 7) reads like observations from a bar stool. It is historically questionable ("Ireland has never politicised Britain." Really? What caused the fall of Gladstone's Liberal government?), contradictory (on the one hand, Young begins by noting how important the Irish-American vote is to Clinton's re-election chances and then asserts that "Ireland [has no] importance beyond its own shores"), and most baffling of all seems to rest on the complaint that Ireland is not Israel or the former Yugoslavia.

Young appears to be believe that the whole reason the conflict exists is due to "the gang-leaders and pseudo-religious zealots who masquerade as political leaders". The implication of the entire article is that there is no underlying political problem and indeed he states the Irish problem is "now wholly artificial".

Surely Hugo Young appreciates that there is a clear and complex underlying problem. Northern Ireland contains two identifiably distinct ethnic groups who are pursuing different and incompatible goals: a Unionist majority who fear unification (or even power sharing) with what they see as a foreign country, which has since its creation been run along overtly Catholic lines; and a nationalist minority who were alienated by 50 years of misrule, discriminated against and effectively disenfranchised.

The fact that the Republic may now be increasingly secular and the North more egalitarian does not make the conflict "merely squalid". The conflict and the communities have become so polarised that simply stating the new position does not erase the mistrust or make the incompatible compatible.

Young is guilty of oversimplification; he takes the easy option of offering complaint and comparisons with other trouble spots (Are all conflicts relative? Are only the bloodiest of those that threaten other state's security worthy of international attention?) but no solutions. Merely ignoring the root problem, blaming the (exclusively Irish) politicians and using terms like "pitiful" and "contemptible" will not make the problem go away. A tawdry piece of journalism.

Eamonn O'Kane,
Colombo, Sri Lanka

I AGREE with the sentiment of Hugo Young's article, but not his rhetoric. He rightly accuses the IRA and the Unionists of intransigence, but leaves out the British government in apportioning blame for the stalemate.

Now, unsurprisingly, the Unionists cling to the possibility of holding the Tories to political ransom in Parliament, and Sinn Fein seeks a larger audience in the US for a hearing that they cannot get closer to home, because the Tories have not suggested any meaningful way of progressing. The RUC have already made it clear that disarming terrorists would not stop them from rapidly assembling home-made bombs, yet the Tories insist on pointless preconditions.

Furthermore, the terrorists are not representative of the Irish people, where debate and pacifism are an underestimated part of the culture. These groups would soon be marginalised in a peaceful Ireland.

If John Major could rise above Britain's own prejudices towards Ireland and instigate debate engaging the whole of the Irish people without preconditions, a lasting peace would surely raise his own profile more than Mr Clinton's.

Frankie O'Brien,
Bondi Junction, NSW, Australia

Aid needs to be well focused

WILL HUTTON (Aid that only basket cases need apply for, January 28) is right to decry falls in the size of Britain's overseas aid programme; and correct in his analysis that a rising share of aid channelled through the European Union threatens the critical mass of British bilateral aid. However, it is a mistake to believe that greater concentration on a smaller number of countries is necessarily a betrayal of past principles or a misguided policy for the future.

The fact is that British aid is pulled every which way by political and commercial pressures. In 1977, there were 124 recipient countries; by 1982, this had risen to 130; and in 1994, the number was over 160, including many new recipients in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. No bilateral aid programme is big enough to make a substantial impact in this number of countries. It is a post-colonial delusion to think that British aid must be "comprehensive".

Nor would such a programme, in Will Hutton's words, "become little more than poverty relief and technical assistance for basket cases". India, Bangladesh Uganda, Ethiopia, and other poor countries are not "basket cases". They are countries where British and other aid has a proven track-record in saving lives and in helping poor people to secure sustainable livelihoods.

That's what British aid claims to be about. It needs more money and a greater concentration of resources.

Simon Maxwell,
Fellow, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex

Canadian myths impede progress

BRUCE INKSETTER (January 21) seems to suggest that "English Canada" really does exist: it consists of those who have lived all their lives in Quebec and can't speak any French — rather a small number from my personal observation, and certainly politically insignificant. Mr Inksetter should come down from the country and visit Montreal some time. I teach in an "English" college which has students from 63 different ethnic groups, from every continent: in a single class there may be 10 or more different first languages.

As a result of Bill 101, the language law which came into effect in 1977, the children of immigrants must attend French schools until college. I therefore have students who speak Bengali, Vietnamese, Croatian or Arabic at home, have graduated from a French high school, and are now doing post-secondary work in English.

Unfortunately, there are some members of the Parti Québécois who do not accept these students and their parents as true "Québécois": Mr Parizeau, in his speech admitting defeat in the referendum, said that it was only "money and the ethnic vote" which had prevented independence from becoming a fact.

The attitudes of both Mr Parizeau and Mr Inksetter, however quaint and removed from reality, must be seen for what they are — myths, which can only impede political progress in Quebec and Canada.

Richard Lock,
Westmount, Quebec, Canada

Breach of the constitution

MANY residents of New South Wales have been dismayed and angered by the recent action of its premier in expelling the state governor from his official residence in order to turn into a museum for the benefit of the people, a feeble excuse if ever there was one.

Whether or not Australia becomes a republic, until that change is made, the Commonwealth and its seven states constitutionally must continue to give their allegiance to the Queen of Australia from whom ultimately they derive their authority. It follows that the recent action of the state premier in depriving the Queen's representative of his official residence must be seen not only as an insult to Her Majesty, but as a dishonourable political act without precedence since at no stage was the electorate consulted.

If such actions are allowed to go unchallenged, Australian electorates can find good cause to fear for the political integrity of republican governments of the future untrammelled by those traditional restraints that the Westminster constitution imposes to guard the civil liberties of the people.

Roger Milton,
Raglan, NSW, Australia

Getting the bird(s)

AFTER Peter Mayles's idiosyncratic view of Provençal people, we are inflicted with Peter Squibb's expat vision of Provençal birds (A Country Diary, January 7). I have been watching birds in southern France for 25 years and I thought I knew the subject well until Mr Squibb wrote about his sensational findings.

Does he realise that nobody else before him has seen rock thrushes wintering in Europe? If he is right, it would mean a complete change of behaviour for this attractive but very shy bird to mix in flocks with other thrushes and to go "to roost in the woods" with them . . . a curious feat indeed — rock thrushes, as their name suggests, being strictly rock-dwellers.

Among his list of common Provençal birds, two of them, the tree creeper and rooks, are great rarities and I would suggest he looks twice in his guide-book just to be sure he didn't watch the much more usual short-toed tree creeper and carrion crows.

Furthermore, Mr Squibb appears to be the first man lucky enough to have sighted "long-tailed finches" and "short-eared eagle", two species previously undetected in the western Palearctic, if not worldwide.

I nevertheless thank the "very amateur" author for one thing: we French ornithologists no longer feel inferior to the erstwhile more skilful British birders.

Jean-Yves Guillosson,
Aumessas, France

Briefly

THE criticism of Harriet Harman and Jack Dromey is misplaced (The Week in Britain, January 28). We faced the same dilemma when we sent our eldest son to St Olave's school in 1987. At the time, one of us was a senior national Labour party official and we consulted the then leader of the Labour party. The advice was: whatever criticisms you have of the present education system, it is the one in which your son will be educated.

Would any parent trust a politician who was prepared to sacrifice his or her own child's future on the altar of political belief?

Nigel Williamson,
Biggin Hill, Westerham, Kent

FOR ME, the Shadow Cabinet's tacit endorsement of Harriet Harman's hypocrisy is the end of the road. Like many Labour parents I was relieved to hear David Blunkett's unambiguous "Read my lips. No selection" at the party conference. How can Harman and Jack Dromey possibly reconcile their party's commitment to education as an agent of social cohesion with their decision to send their son to a highly selective grammar school? I fear New Labour turns out to be a repackaging of the "me first" instincts of Thatcherism.

Margaret Course,
Wallington, Oxfordshire

CONGRATULATIONS to your leader writer (January 21) for taking five years to discover what was painfully obvious (from your columns) about the Gulf war from the very start: that it was really "fought about oil" and that "last-ditch diplomatic meetings . . . were a necessary sham . . ."

You say that "real people face real death unless the truth is concealed", but isn't the reverse true? Couldn't many real deaths have been avoided by not fighting the war in the first place? Wasn't the Gulf war as tragically pointless as the Falklands/Malvinas war? And why did you not oppose the former, as you did the latter? Because there's no oil in the Falklands?

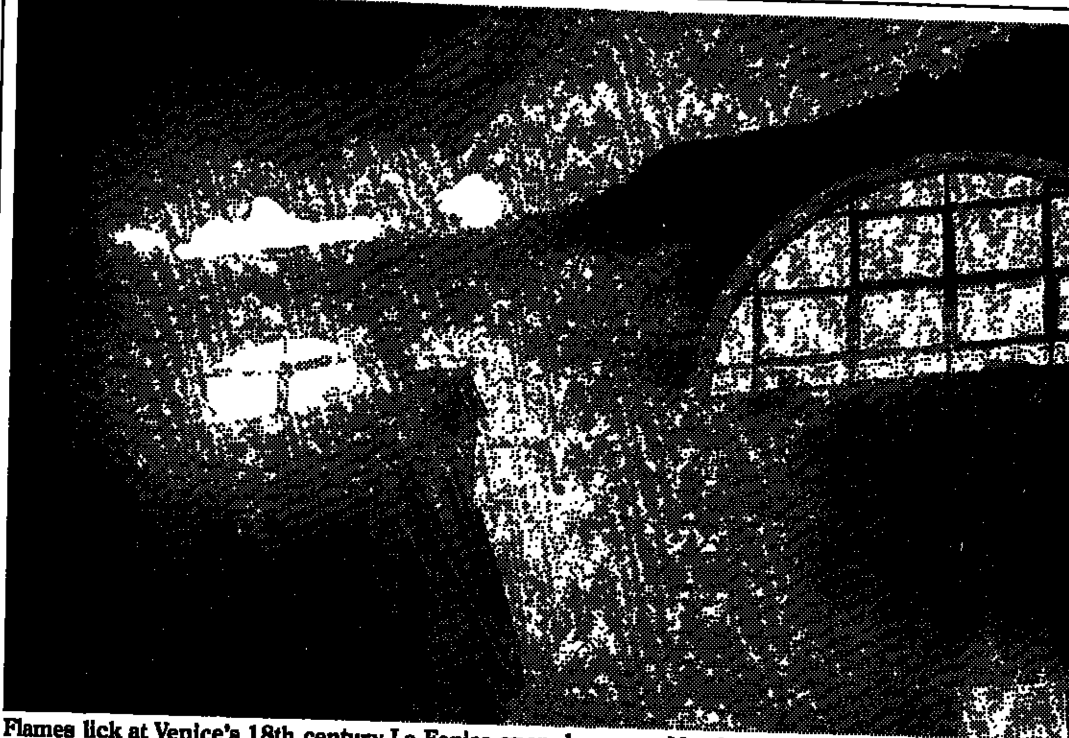
Martin Roberts,
Churubusco, Mexico City, Mexico

MICHAEL FREEDLAND in his obituary of Dean Martin (January 7) trots out the old chestnut about his best role being in Rio Bravo. It was a fine movie, and Martin took a desperate career gamble by playing a drunk which he does in a funny, moving but rather monotone performance. His finest role, as any cinema buff will tell you, was in that much underrated Billy Wilder film Kiss Me Stupid, where, as Dino, he turns into a beautifully modulated send-up of himself.

Euan Pearson,
Kumasi, Ghana

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Letters to the Editor and other editorial correspondence to: The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. Fax: 44-171-242-0985 (UK: 0171-242 0985) e-mail: weekly@guardian.co.uk



Flames lick at Venice's 18th century La Fenice opera house on Monday. The entire building was gutted by a huge fire, a month before the 204-year-old neoclassical theatre was due to reopen after renovation. Police said no one was hurt in the blaze. La Fenice, 'the phoenix' in Italian, was virtually destroyed by fire in 1836 but was rebuilt to become one of Italy's great artistic institutions PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREA MEROLA

Russia assures US it will stick to reform plan

Martin Walker in Washington and David Hearst in Moscow

THE Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, sought to woo President Clinton on Monday with promises that economic and political reform would continue "with certain corrections". His aim was to prise loose the $9.5 billion International Monetary Fund credits, which are now being reviewed.

The visit by Mr Chernomyrdin, for one of the regular meetings of the economic co-operation commission he chairs with Vice-President Al Gore, was the first high-level meeting between the two countries since the Russian elections last year and the Kremlin reshuffle last month, which purged prominent liberals and market reformers.

In sessions with Mr Clinton and Mr Gore, Mr Chernomyrdin stressed that Russia's privatisation and free enterprise reforms were "irreversible". He also said the Russian government was still committed to the IMF financial stabilisation programme, to co-operating with Nato in in Bosnia and to a negotiated settlement in Chechenia.

Elections this year in both Russia and the US could inspire "some improper interpretation of events" and misleading political rhetoric, Mr Chernomyrdin warned, trying to reinforce telephone assurances about reform made by Mr Yeltsin to Mr Clinton last week.

But the Chernomyrdin visit to Washington has brought back cold war memories of an inscrutable Kremlin whose intentions in domestic and foreign policy baffle and divide western analysts, despite a free press and open debates on policy in the Duma.

Last week Mr Yeltsin appointed a leading proponent of industrial protectionism to the Russian government's top economics post.

The appointment of Vladimir Kadannikov, the director of AvtoVAZ, Russia's biggest and most troubled car-maker, as a first deputy prime minister, was the clearest sign yet of the rise of the industrial lobby in the government. It wants controls on energy prices, tariffs on foreign imports and the end of punitive taxation.

As Mr Yeltsin made the announcement — protesting that he was still a reformer — the Council of Europe voted grudgingly to admit Russia as a member, despite criticism of Moscow's military crackdown in Chechenia.

The Council of Europe's approval of Russian membership was a boost to pro-western forces in the country and a milestone in Moscow's campaign to join a leading organisation set up to promote western integration during the cold war. After a day of acrimonious debate, the council's parliamentary assembly voted by 164 to 35, with 15 abstentions.

To fend off suspicions in the West that he is moving rapidly to the nationalist right as he prepares for a bruising re-election campaign, Mr Yeltsin pledged there would be "no change" to Russia's political and economic reform after the departure of a string of reformist ministers.

Mr Kadannikov replaces Anatoli Chubais, the designer and main proponent of Russia's privatisation programme, and chief negotiator with the IMF. The ministerial changes made the IMF nervous about issuing a $9.5 billion loan that appeared to be in the bag only a week earlier.

The US ambassador in Moscow, Tom Pickering, is looking on the bright side, however, and insisting that "the glass is more than half-full, with successful democratic elections and economic production starting to rise again".

The Russian presidential election this summer has sent Mr Yeltsin on a public spending spree which has mystified deputies and economists. Faced with plaintive cries from millions of unpaid workers, Mr Yeltsin has in recent days promised a $6 billion fund to pay public workers on time, $5 billion for the reconstruction of Chechenia, $2 billion to the mining industry, $130 million in unpaid wages to miners, a 20 per cent increase in student grants, and an increase in pensions.

But no place has been allotted for the wages in the tight 1996 budget, signed by Mr Yeltsin himself.

Black Jews riot over 'blood bias'

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

ISRAELI authorities were sticking to their policy of destroying most donations to the country's blood bank, despite protests at the weekend by thousands of Ethiopian immigrants who besieged the prime minister's office alleging official racism.

Their protest was sparked by the admission of health officials that almost all Ethiopian blood was destroyed for fear that its use in transfusions could spread Aids.

Dozens were injured when police fired tear gas, rubber-coated bullets and water cannon to disperse the frenzied demonstration. At least 30 police were wounded when the Ethiopians hurled stones, at one point threatening to break through the cordon of guards around the building.

The battle lasted several hours. It ended when Shimon Peres, the prime minister, met a delegation of protesters, announcing later that the government would establish a committee of inquiry.

The Israel blood bank is also to insert a line in the form for donors saying that medical discretion will govern the use of all donated blood.

Mr Peres "apologised in the name of the government and on his own behalf, even though none of the government members knew" about the disposal of donated blood. His spokeswoman said he praised the Ethiopian immigrants.

The daily newspaper, Ma'ariv, revealed last week that virtually all blood donated by Ethiopians is thrown away. Only donations of the rarest blood groups are frozen and checked after six months for the HIV virus.

Ephraim Sneh, the health minister, defended the policy, saying it also applied to other high-risk groups, such as homosexuals and drug abusers.

Officials said Ethiopians were not told of the policy to spare them embarrassment.

There was little sign of embarrassment, more of fury at the weekend. "Although our skin is black, our blood is as red as yours and we are just as Jewish as you are," read one banner at the demonstration. "Apartheid in Israel," read another.

About 60,000 Ethiopian Jews have come to Israel in recent years. In 1984 and 1991 the government organised airlifts which brought in tens of thousands. More than 500 have been found to be carrying the HIV virus — 50 times the rate among other Israelis.

The blood donation affair is acutely embarrassing for many Israelis who are genuinely enthusiastic about the assimilation of such a large group of immigrants from a profoundly different culture.

But for many Ethiopians, it is the culmination of years of systematic discrimination in housing, employment, and even in religion.

González associate charged

Adela Gooch in Madrid

THE Spanish supreme court last week charged a former interior minister and close associate of the prime minister, Felipe González, with involvement in the 1980s "dirty war" against Basque separatists, severely damaging the ruling Socialist party's electoral prospects.

Jose Barrionuevo will be tried after the election for kidnapping, misappropriation of state funds and membership of an illegal armed band. The court found evidence of his involvement in the 1983 kidnapping of a French businessman by the Anti-Terrorist Liberation Groups (GAL) — a front for security forces and hired gunmen who killed 27 people during the "dirty war".

The severity of the charges against Mr Barrionuevo, who was interior minister during the period the GAL gunmen were active, is a heavy blow to the Socialists, as they trail in the polls leading up to the general election in March.

The investigating magistrate, Eduardo Moner, had been expected to bring one charge at most against him, but the former minister now faces up to 40 years' prison. His conviction would have serious repercussions for Mr González, establishing a direct link between the government and the GAL.

The prime minister has denied that he or any member of his administration knew about or condoned GAL activities and has said Mr Barrionuevo is innocent. The Socialist party said there were no plans to drop Mr Barrionuevo from the list of candidates in the election.

The indictment brings the affair closer to Mr González than ever before — a campaign gift for the opposition and its leader, Jose Maria Aznar, who opinion polls predict will win.

China threat mounts against Taiwan

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

FEAR that China could move from rhetoric to rocket attacks to tame Taiwan sent share prices tumbling in Taipei last week and stirred anxious debate in other Asian capitals about Beijing's surging economic and military power.

The jitters were provoked by a New York Times report that China's 3-million strong People's Liberation Army (PLA) had drafted a plan to fire one missile a day for 30 days, as early as this spring.

The Chinese foreign ministry did nothing to assuage anxiety about how far the PLA might go to halt what Beijing sees as Taiwan's drift towards independence under President Lee Teng-hui.

Retreating from its initial assertion that claims of imminent military action were "totally groundless", a Beijing spokesman declined to comment on "speculation", repeating China's customary refusal to rule out the use of force.

"If Taiwan authorities stick obstinately to their wrongful positions, the interests of the Taiwan people will ultimately be harmed," the chief spokesman, Chen Jian, said.

The Hong Kong Economic Times recently reported that Beijing plans to outline a timetable for reunification with Taiwan. China declined to comment on the report.

Dealers in the foreign exchange market said Taiwan's central bank intervened to defend the local currency against a run after the report.

Reports of Chinese contingency plans to attack Taiwan emerged late last year in Hong Kong, when the PLA declared the coastal region facing Taiwan a "war zone", held a mock invasion on a Taiwan-like island off Fujian, and set up a new joint command centre on Taiwan.

Yet China's strategy seems to rely heavily on psychological warfare. With Taiwan due to hold its first democratic presidential elections in March, Beijing wants to step up pressure against President Lee, the likely winner.

Mr Lee's opponents have campaigned on the promise of better relations with China. "He is the origin of the chaos," Chen Li-an, a conservative candidate, said.

Few believe China has the military hardware, the training or the political will to risk a full-scale invasion likely to ignite a regional conflagration. But, as China awaits the death of its 91-year-old paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, bellicose nationalism has become the safest policy option for the insecure new generation of leaders around President Jiang Zemin.

● A Philippine navy patrol boat exchanged gunfire last week with a Chinese ship in the most serious South China Sea incident since a tense confrontation in the contested Spratly islands eight months ago.

The gunboat fired a warning shot after two ships identified as Chinese were spotted, about 70 miles west of Manila, near the former American naval base of Subic Bay. As one Chinese ship sped off, the other fired back and a 90-minute battle ensued, the Philippine military reported.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
February 4 1996

The Week

THE corruption scandal that has engulfed some of India's leading politicians in the run-up to April's general election crept closer to the prime minister, Narasimha Rao, after the opposition accused him of taking bribes from the businessman at the heart of the $18 million affair.

THE US Food and Drug Administration approved the country's first zero-calorie artificial fat. The product, olestra, can be used to replace the fat in potato crisps and other snacks.

TWO MORE leaders of the Greenpeace International's campaign against nuclear testing in the Pacific have lost their jobs. Thomas Shultz left by mutual agreement, while Paul McGhee went under organisational changes.

ISRAEL has agreed to pay $400,000 to the family of Ahmed Bouchikhi, a Moroccan waiter, who was allegedly killed by Israeli agents in 1973 in a case of mistaken identity.

NEARLY two-thirds of the 55,000 inmates of Nigerian prisons have not been brought to trial. Some have been waiting more than 10 years, according to the interior minister, Baba Gana Kingibe.

THE Polish prime minister, Jozef Olesky, resigned after military prosecutors decided to launch an inquiry into allegations that he spied for Moscow.

OLGA HAVLOVA, a leading dissident and the wife of Czech president Vaclav Havel, has died of cancer, aged 62.

JOHN ELEUTHERE du Pont, one of many heirs to the fortune of the US chemical company that bears his name, was arrested for the murder of a gold-medallist wrestler shot on his estate last week.

NIGER'S new military leaders say they have received six nominations for a prime minister to lead a civilian government until elections. Lt-Colonel Ibrahim Mainassara, who ousted Niger's first democratically elected president, Mahamane Ousmane, said he had no plans to hold on to power.

THE bodies of three British soldiers killed by a landmine in western Bosnia were recovered after 24 hours of work hampered by heavy snowfall and the hidden danger of more mines.

JOHN ALBERT TAYLOR, a 36-year-old convicted child killer, was executed by firing squad in a converted warehouse at Utah State Prison in Draper. "It went like clockwork," warden Hank Galetka said after four bul-

SA gunmen massacre job-seekers

David Beresford in Johannesburg

AT LEAST eight people were killed in South Africa on Monday in a savage attack on a group of unemployed workers which brought back chilling memories of the random killing before majority rule.

Gunmen with rifles and pistols opened fire on more than 2,000 people queuing overnight for 200 jobs at a die-casting factory at Alberton, in the industrial belt east of Johannesburg. The attack took place shortly before 3am.

Police said they had been given conflicting accounts by survivors of what had happened. By one account about seven men pushed their way to the front of the queue and, when protests ensued, produced their guns and sprayed the crowd with bullets.

A survivor, Buthelezi Mtatshelwa, wounded in the chest, told reporters that he had no idea why he had been shot. "I was looking for a job, but I am not going to go back to that place again," he said from his hospital bed.

The factory, NF Die Casting, is owned by the giant Anglo American Corporation.

The two main trade unions at the plant are linked to rival political groups — the ruling African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party. But the management said there was no evidence of inter-union tension which might explain the killings.

The national police commissioner, George Fivaz, and the minister of safety and security, Sydney Mufamadi, announced a reward of R250,000 ($70,000) for information leading to the killers.

The ANC said the attack could have been aimed at undermining peace efforts in KwaZulu-Natal province, at the other end of the country, where a power struggle continues between the ANC and Inkatha. It said the massacre bore "the hallmarks of a 'third force' operating in the midst of our people".

Random attacks — usually on trains or commuter taxis — tailed off after the non-racial elections in 1994. This encouraged speculation that they had been part of a political conspiracy involving elements of the security forces.

The government is concerned, however, that such a force may still be operating, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. The suspicion has been increased by evidence of police involvement in a massacre on Christmas Day at Shobashobane, near Port Shepstone, in which 19 people were hacked to death.

Mr Fivaz said on Monday that at least 10 policemen had been linked to the Shobashobane incident and that their arrest was imminent. More than 1,000 Zulus were involved in the attack. The police seem to have had intelligence that it was being planned, but did nothing to prevent it.

● Trade unions in Swaziland on Monday called off a week-long general strike that had plunged the kingdom, and its absolute ruler King Mswati III, into the worst crisis since independence in 1968. The decision followed the return to work of thousands of members of the breakaway Swaziland Federation of Labour.

Can't go, won't go . . . police drag away a homeless protester during last week's eviction of men from a central Tokyo shantytown. The unusually harsh crackdown shocked passers-by PHOTO: ITSUO INOUYE

EU to recognise Belgrade

John Palmer in Brussels

EUROPEAN Union foreign ministers said on Monday they were on the point of formally recognising rump Yugoslavia — Serbia and Montenegro — despite pressure from Washington to deny such rewards to the Belgrade government.

The EU overture to the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, has angered the United States, human rights groups and those investigating war crimes.

The German foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, said earlier that the issue had been put on ice because of transatlantic policy differences. He said he had received a message from the US secretary of state, Warren Christopher, restating Washington's opposition.

But later the French foreign minister, Hervé de Charette, said the text of an EU recognition declaration had been agreed, and that

EU recognition is seen as a reward for President Milosevic's help in securing the Dayton peace agreement.

Last week the president of the International War Crimes Tribunal, Richard Goldstone, said he had not received "even the minimum of co-operation" from Belgrade.

After the meeting in Brussels the Italian foreign minister, Susan Agnelli, said it was hoped that recognition would come "really quite soon".

Ministers claimed they were only waiting for confirmation of a detailed mutual recognition agreement between Belgrade and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

"This is now the only issue that remains to be settled," the British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, said. "There is a general view now that we should be moving towards recognition of Yugoslavia."

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 15

Labor faces uphill battle in Australia

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

THE CHANCES of the prime minister, Paul Keating, leading the Australian Labor party to its sixth term in office looked poor as the election campaign began on Monday with the latest polls taking the conservative opposition's lead to 14 points.

The Liberal-National party coalition needs only a 0.5 per cent swing on March 2 to take seven seats from Labor and unseat the party after 13 years in power.

The Labor party holds 79 seats in the federal parliament, the coalition 66 and independents two. Under the preferential electoral system, the first party to win 75 seats forms a government.

Mr Keating, aged 52, dismisses opinion poll results, saying a good leader does not have to be popular. But he has slipped further behind the opposition leader, John Howard, during the past year.

"There's still a long way to go," a cautious Mr Howard told supporters in Sydney this week. "Don't be mesmerised or seduced by volatile opinion polls on day one."

Monday's polls show that Labor's support has fallen to 36 per cent, compared with the coalition's 50 per cent. Betting shops are giving heavy odds against a Labor win.

Mr Keating began his campaign in Melbourne by announcing a US$150 million four-year programme to combat high youth unemployment, homelessness and drug addition. He promised to cut the unemployment rate, as high as 30 per cent in some areas, to 5 per cent by 2000.

Mr Howard promised to help small businesses improve job prospects for the young.

Labor's first television commercials have tried to paint Mr Howard as a weak, far-right monarchist bereft of new policies who wants to turn the clock back. Mr Howard, aged 56, was dropped as opposition leader after his 1987 poll defeat, but made a comeback last year.

The Democrats, the third party, are campaigning under the slogan "Keep the bastards honest". Led by Cheryl Kernot, they face a battle with the Greens to retain the balance of power in the senate, where half the 80 seats are up for re-election

Bouchard takes over in Quebec

Clare Trevena in Toronto

THE MOST popular politician in Quebec, the separatist leader Lucien Bouchard, was sworn in as the province's premier on Monday.

The ceremony comes in the wake of a poll which shows that 60 per cent of Quebecois believe the province will become a sovereign state within 10 years. The hope of secessionists is that with someone of Mr Bouchard's stature and popularity leading the provincial Parti Québécois, any future referendum on autonomy will be approved by Quebec voters.

Jacques Parizeau, the pro-secession premier, resigned after blaming the loss of October's independence referendum on "the ethnic vote".

Once it was known that Mr Bouchard, who led the separatists in the federal parliament, was interested in the job no one doubted he would get it. But Mr Bouchard, whose smooth political skills and vibrant personality increased the separatist vote in last year's independence poll — bringing it within one percentage point of victory — is adopting a low key approach. Separation from the rest of Canada is still the goal, but echoing the respondents to the poll, an ultimate rather than immediate one.

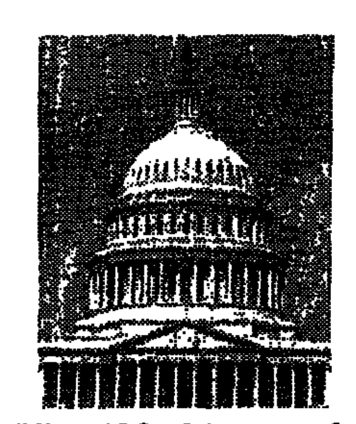
First Mr Bouchard will have to improve Quebec's economy. And like provincial leaders across the country his priority is reducing the province's $5 billion deficit.

"We are crushed by an unacceptably heavy load of debt," he said last week in his nomination speech in the constituency which is sure to elect him to the provincial legislature. "We haven't yet been able to control the deficit, which means we've borrowed and mortgaged the future of our children to buy the groceries."

Opponents of Mr Bouchard have long envisaged the scenario: the separatist politician becomes provincial leader, makes swingeing cuts to Quebec's much cherished social programmes for the sake of the deficit and swiftly sheds his hero's cloak.

That may be unlikely because of Mr Bouchard's immense popularity but there will inevitably be friction when the hero comes home with $1 billion worth of cuts to make.

Clinton revealed as Great Communicator



The US this week

Martin Walker

THE MOST succinct comment on the characteristically compelling performance by President Clinton in the State of the Union address last week came from his critics. "I thought Ronald Reagan had taken over his body," said Republican party chairman Haley Barbour. Indeed, the ghost of the Great Communicator seemed to hover in the Capitol as Clinton shamelessly copied Reagan's rhetorical tricks.

Reagan understood the art of appearing to be above party politics. Having spent several hours the previous week watching Reagan videos, Clinton proved an apt pupil. He called on American heroes to rise in the balcony, saluted America's veterans and, in a chivalrous touch, included his election challenger, Senator Bob Dole. Above all, Clinton exuded optimism, about America and about himself, and that was always Reagan's secret weapon.

Clinton purloined many of Reagan's policies too, with the breathtaking assertion, "The era of Big Government is over," and claimed credit for a still-to-be-achieved agreement with Congress to balance the budget. The president praised the idea of school uniforms, and challenged Hollywood "to make films and programmes you'd be proud for your own children and grandchildren to see".

He even escalated his former tough-on-crime slogan of "three strikes and you're out", the mandatory life sentence for a third violent crime. Vowing no tolerance of violent or drug-related crime in public housing, his new slogan was, "One strike and you're out".

"The speech was about one quarter Ronald Reagan, about two-thirds Lyndon Johnson and about 10 per cent George McGovern," commented Speaker Newt Gingrich. "Anybody could read the part they liked and be thrilled, or read the part they didn't like and be worried. The president talks a good game."

Clinton, who usually excels at these setpiece occasions, was given a 75 per cent approval rating for his speech by the ABC News poll and dismayed Republicans around the country. At least temporarily, he overcame his wife's Whitewater troubles to make a powerful start to his re-election campaign.

"The president was at his best. What struck me was the physical strength and vigour of a man in campaign mode, while Senator Dole's reply was lame and tired," Dr Tom Gilliam, a Republican county chairman in Florida, said. "Republicans were calling round to each other after the speeches, and kind of wept on each other's shoulders. Clinton is going to be very, very hard to beat. And I think everyone in the country, whatever their politics, took their hat off to him for that moving tribute to his wife."

The president departed from his script to look up at his wife in the balcony, and salute her as "a wonderful wife and magnificent mother and a great first lady". Their daughter Chelsea instantly rose to lead a standing ovation, and courtesy left Gingrich and the Republicans little option but to rise from their seats and join the applause for a woman who had just received her subpoena to give evidence to the grand jury on Whitewater.

In Iowa, which holds the first presidential caucus of the election later this month, local Republicans were also depressed by the performance of Dole, their elderly front runner, against Clinton's confident borrowing of their better campaign themes.

"If Clinton versus Dole is the match-up in November, we are in trouble," said Representative Christopher Rents, a member of the Iowa legislature. "Clinton reached into his bag of tricks and pulled out something for everybody. He sounded like a Republican. Dole doesn't project a positive image. He didn't project a future under Republicans."

"Clinton had vision, he talked up all the good things that have happened and reached out to literally every group out there," commented the Republican leader in the Iowa state legislature, Brent Siegrist. "He's going to be very difficult to beat."

My own sampling of public opinion on Washington's Connecticut Avenue found that most people had watched the speech, and found something to admire, and everybody recalled his unscripted salute to the balcony, and his statement that Mrs Clinton was "a truly great first lady".

But Dole's speech in reply, which suggested Clinton always promised more than he could deliver, found echoes on the streets of Washington. "Clinton promised us health care, and that sank without trace, and he promised to be the candidate of change, and nothing's changed that I can see, so I don't believe a word he says," said Jason Wild, aged 27, an investment analyst.

"I think the president has moved so far towards the Republicans that we can't really call him a Democrat any more," said Philip Moser, a retired librarian. "It seems like he's apologising for everything Democrats used to be proud of. If he goes on like this we'll have to choose between Republicans come November."

The US media overwhelmingly scored Clinton's speech a success, and Dole's a disappointment, in what was seen as the first presidential debate of the 1996 election. Clinton's performance was followed by what even Republican loyalist and talk-show host Rush Limbaugh called "a lacklustre reply" by Dole.

In consequence, a wave of alarm about their hopes of recapturing the White House this year under Dole's leadership is chilling Republican party stalwarts, even as they broke all fund-raising records with a $16.3 million dinner in Washington last week.



Dole's once-massive opinion poll leads of 30 and 40 percentage points in the first caucus state of Iowa and the first primary state of New Hampshire have eroded to low single figures. Although still the best funded and best-organised candidate in the race, with the endorsements of most of the party hierarchy, Dole is now running 10 points behind challenger Steve Forbes in Arizona.

The gathering mood of a "Dump Dole" movement was palpable at the Republican National Committee's fund-raising event on Wednesday night last week, as more than 3,500 wealthy donors rose to cheer the candidate that never was, retired general Colin Powell.

"Run, Colin, Run," they chanted, despite his firm statement not to stand for any elective office this year. They also cheered Gingrich, another non-candidate for the presidency, who gave the keynote speech to the dinner in aid of funds for this year's congressional campaigns. Tickets were $1,000-a-head, which should have netted $3.5 million. But the lure of special titles and special access, and lunches with Gingrich and Powell for those who raised $250,000 and more, produced a grand total of $16,340,000.

IF CLINTON continues on his State of the Union form, all that money may be spent in vain. On the other hand, if a criminal indictment is formally laid against Hillary Clinton, the Republicans may not need to spend a dime to score a landslide. For if it was the best of weeks for Bill, it was the worst of weeks for Hillary.

Cheerfully asserting that she was "looking forward to telling everything I know", Mrs Clinton became the first presidential wife in history to appear before a federal grand jury. Called as a witness rather than as "a target", which means no charges are yet envisaged against her, the woman once voted among America's 100 most influential lawyers put a bold public face on a personal and political humiliation that has made her the most unpopular and least trusted first lady in history.

Refusing offers of discreet back door or underground entrances, Mrs Clinton insisted on the full public spectacle. She walked through the main doors of the US district courthouse and said a few words for the electronic shrubbery of microphones and cameras, as if to symbolise a clear conscience.

"I'm happy to answer the grand jury's questions and look forward to telling them what I know in the hope that it will help them with their investigation," she said. With a cool and confident smile, she tossed her hair and swept alone into the courthouse, like an actress making a dramatic entrance. Each step and phrase reeked of rehearsal, and even her costume was deliberately striking. Her black coat billowed behind her, an unusual blaze of white embroidery on its back drawing all eyes.

It was a short ride from the White House to the US federal court building where the grand jury that probed President Nixon's involvement with Watergate convened 22 years ago. Through the gauntlet of TV cameras and reporters, she was led into the windowless, wood-panelled room on the third floor where the Iran-Contra grand jury agreed eight years earlier to prosecute Colonel Oliver North and President Reagan's national security advisers.

Alone with the grand jury, the special prosecutor and a stenographer, and with no lawyer allowed into the room to help her, Mrs Clinton was then questioned on oath for four hours about her long-lost billing records which mysteriously re-appeared in a room beside her private study. Demanded under subpoena, the White House and Rose Law firm had claimed for two years they had been lost without trace.

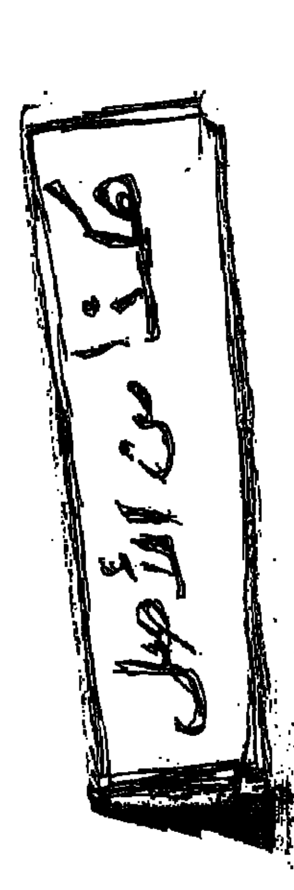
Detailing not only her work for the bankrupt Madison Guaranty, the Arkansas bank owned by the Clintons' partner in the ill-fated Whitewater vacation resort investment, the records also list Mrs Clinton's legal work for other actors in the complex saga. The 116 pages were covered with the scrawled notes of her former law partner, and former deputy White House counsel, Vince Foster, who committed suicide in July 1993.

Almost all the odds were stacked against Mrs Clinton. Grand Juries are empowered to ask any question, however irrelevant or in breach of the usual rules of evidence, and the witness is required to answer. They have a written transcript of proceedings, while the witness does not.

YALE LAW school, where the Clintons gained their legal degrees, have a proverb that "a good prosecutor can get a grand jury to indict a ham sandwich". In this case, the special prosecutor is Kenneth Starr, solicitor-general in the Bush administration, and a leading candidate to become attorney-general in any future Republican administration.

The Republicans say this is only fair. Although the jurors are anonymous, they are all from Washington DC. The odds are they are mainly African-American, mainly female, and overwhelmingly Democratic voters. Mrs Clinton also seems to have had one admirer in the Grand Jury room. During a break, one juror brought out a copy of her new book, It Takes A Village (To Raise A Child), and asked her to autograph it.

The American public, however, does not trust her. Gallup reported last week that for the first time in polling history a majority of Americans now disapprove of their first lady — a depth even Nancy Reagan never plumbed. Mrs Clinton inspires a yawning gender gap. Among self-declared liberals, and among women under the age of 40, she has close to 70 per cent support, compared with only 21 per cent among middle-aged white men. A poll in the New York Daily News found that she was most disliked by college-educated white males, "because she reminds them of their wives".



Shell admits arms imports into Nigeria

Cameron Duodu

SHELL, the multinational oil giant, has admitted importing weapons into Nigeria to help arm the police. The company said the weapons are to help protect its oil installations. However, activists accuse Shell of arming the death squads who have been brutally suppressing the Ogoni people.

The admission comes in the wake of reports in Nigerian newspapers that Shell placed tenders in Nigeria for the importation of arms. Eric Nickson, a spokesman for Shell International, said: "Shell has purchased sidearms — handguns — on behalf of the Nigerian police force who guard Shell's facilities. But once imported, the arms remain the property of the Nigerian police, who store, guard and use them."

Shell would not say where the arms are being imported from, nor how many are involved. Mr Nickson said the practice is carried out by a "wide range of companies in Nigeria, who employ the police to guard their facilities".

But a highly respected former Chief of Defence Staff in Nigeria, Lieutenant-General Alani Akinrinade, said: "The Nigerian police are well equipped and do not need anyone to import arms for them." Pointing out that the Nigerian police have "their mobile force, who are armed to the teeth", he added: "There is no excuse for anyone to have a private army in Nigeria. They don't need it."

Shell's admission will confirm the worst fears of the Ogoni people of south-eastern Nigeria, who have been accusing it of acting in collusion with the Nigerian government's security agencies. Ogoni people have been killed and maimed while protesting against the environmental devastation of Ogonilands. Shell pulled out of the Ogoni area in 1993.

In 1990, the mobile police killed 15 people in the village of Umechem, where Shell installations were being attacked by villagers angry at the pollution.

Human rights abuses by Nigeria's military regime have meant that limited sanctions have been in place against the country for some time. The sanctions, which include a ban on military hardware, were strengthened after the execution of the playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists on November 10.

Among those calling for inquiries into Shell's importation of arms into Nigeria are the respected academic, Professor Claude Ake, and Dr Owens Wiwa, brother of Mr Saro-Wiwa. Professor Ake called on the Nigerian government to institute an official inquiry.

Professor Ake drew attention to a court case, pending before a Lagos high court, in which Shell Nigeria is being sued by a Nigerian arms-importing company, Humanitiex Nigeria Ltd, for $1.2 million for "a breach of contract" over arms the company was supposed to import for Shell in 1993. The case was reported last month.

Mr Nickson said that Shell had filed a defence in the Nigerian court, stating that "no contract was drawn up with Humanitiex, in respect of any arms, ammunition or communications equipment". — *The Observer*

Red Cross plans Kabul airlift

One million people under siege face starvation, writes **Gerald Bourke**

WITH its food stocks in the besieged Afghan capital due to run out this week, the International Red Cross is planning to start an emergency airlift into Kabul with 48 flights carrying 20 tonnes of food each.

The airlift is to help relieve the more than a million people who face starvation unless forces opposed to President Burhanuddin Rabbani lift their two-week blockade of the capital, aid officials said on Sunday.

"We estimate that 95 per cent of Kabul's 1.2 million inhabitants are facing severe food and heating-fuel shortages," François Zen Ruffinen, a senior official of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said.

The ICRC is particularly concerned about the 100,000 Kabulis dependent on its feeding programmes.

The price of scarce staple foods has doubled since the last open road into the city — from Pakistan in the east — was sealed by anti-government mojahedin when their leader centralised the collection of their hefty informal taxes.

The onset of the coldest winter in years, with temperatures plummeting to minus 23C, has made the approaching humanitarian catastrophe all the more acute, aid workers said.

The United Nations, which says an airlift is beyond its means, classes 60 per cent of Kabul's population as "most vulnerable" — up from 20 per cent a fortnight ago.

"It's not possible to calculate how many have died so far," Martin Barber, head of the UN's relief operation for Afghanistan, said on Sunday. He added: "It's one of those silent tragedies. You're not going to see appallingly malnourished people on the streets of Kabul; they're suffering in their homes."

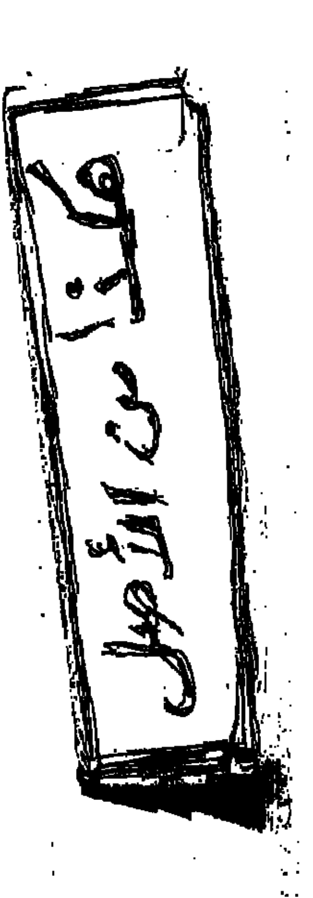
Four months after the launch of the latest 12-month UN appeal, donors have committed a mere 18 per cent of the $124 million minimum required.

Some donor countries say the Kabul government could do more to ease the city's suffering. They claim Dr Rabbani's garrison, estimated at up to 36,000-strong, remains well-fed, and is buying large quantities of weapons before a predicted upsurge in fighting in the spring.

Analysts believe the factions blockading the eastern highway are mercenary, and may soon be bought off.

Aid workers said that 150 trucks, carrying enough food to feed Kabul for a day, had been allowed into the capital at the weekend. They were unable to confirm whether this was a one-off concession or the beginning of the end of the siege.





The Week In Britain James Lewis

CBI banks on wage rises to fuel economic recovery

NEWSAGENTS' billboards proclaiming "Employers demand higher wages" could well have been taken as some sort of tasteless spoof. But it turned out to be no more than a slight over-simplification of the message put out by Adair Turner, director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, once known as the "bosses' union" and, by implication, the voice of the Tory party at work.

What Mr Turner actually said was: "We cannot expect, and would not want, the share of national income given to wages to decline indefinitely." This was no more than an admission that employers have a self-interest in ensuring that real wages rise over time because it creates extra purchasing power to buy their products.

The share of national income accounted for by wages and salaries (including the massive increases awarded to the bosses of privatised industries) fell from 66.5 per cent in 1991 to 62.5 per cent in 1994. And, in the past year, real wages (after allowing for tax and inflation) have dropped below the Tax and Price Index (TPI), which measures living standards for employees. This may explain why the Government has stopped publishing the index.

Real wages are part of the "feel good" factor, on which Tory hopes of winning another term in office depend. Jobs with decent wages are also, presumably, one of the aims of Labour's "stakeholder society". The CBI believes Britain can now afford longer-term growth in real wages because it considers the wage-price spiral to have been broken by greater flexibility in the labour market.

All this coincided with the latest Social Trends survey, published by government statisticians, which once again pointed to the disturbing social consequences of unemployment. The survey, which has been tracking a sample group of 500,000 people since 1971, confirms previous findings that early death rates are 37 per cent higher than average among unemployed men of working age. It also shows joblessness to be a "major factor" in the prevalence of neurotic and depressive disorders.

Will Hutton, page 14

PLANS for Britain's celebration of the millennium were sharply criticised by Prince Charles, who bemoaned their lack of "spiritual significance". He doubted the value of the proposed "landmark projects" to be built across the country, and complained that most of them failed to rise above the material. As a result, he said, the marking of a new century risked becoming "a giant but essentially meaningless party".

He wanted everyone, regardless of their culture or beliefs, to have a stake in the celebration. This could involve building places of worship for the various faiths in Britain, and projects that could "bring new life to the decaying and derelict centres of some of our great cities" and "build bridges across the country's divided society".

His ideas were broadly welcomed, the more so since the Millennium Commission has significantly failed to come up with any one "big idea". But money to mark the millennium is coming from the National Lottery, and Muslim groups were quick to denounce the idea that mosques should be built with "tainted" cash.

KEVIN MAXWELL, son of the late media tycoon, Robert Maxwell, accused the Government of a political vendetta when the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) announced it would press ahead with further charges against him. This was seven days after he and others were acquitted of charges of conspiracy to defraud pensioners of shares worth £122 million.

The first trial cost an estimated £30 million and raised questions about the competence of the SFO. A second trial, suspected of being an attempt to save the reputation of the SFO, will be resisted by Mr Maxwell's lawyers, who will argue that it is oppressive, an abuse of process, and not in the public interest.

ATTENTION was once again focused on the activities of the Duchess of York and her sister-in-law, the Princess of Wales.

The duchess, who was thought to have solved her debt problems with a marketing deal for her Budgie books and a contract to host a TV chat show, both in America, faced a possible writ for the repayment of a £100,000 loan. It was issued by Lily Rathan Mahtani who said she lent the money in 1994 so the duchess could take a six-week holiday in France. She claimed that only £5,000 had been repaid.

Princess Diana's tangle with lawyers was more intriguing. She was sent a letter by libel specialist, Peter Carter-Ruck, demanding that she withdraw allegations made against Tiggy Legge-Bourke, personal assistant to her estranged husband, Prince Charles, and nanny to their two sons. At the same time, Mr Carter-Ruck wrote to newspaper editors, warning them of "malicious lies" which they should not publish.

This was a virtual invitation to editors to find out what these "malicious lies" were. It is alleged that the princess and Ms Legge-Bourke had bumped into one another at a Christmas party and that the princess had whispered to her, mock-sympathetically: "So sorry to hear about the baby."

The princess was believed to be implying that Ms Legge-Bourke had had an abortion.



Romantic dilemma for child bride

Sally Weale

IT WAS Arthur Brooke's 1562 poem The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet that provided the inspiration for Shakespeare's romantic tragedy. Had the Bard been writing today, he need have looked no further than the front page of the Sun.

The story of 13-year-old Essex schoolgirl Sarah Cook might have begun as a typical holiday romance — two teenagers canoodling on a sun-soaked Mediterranean beach — and hardly the stuff of great drama.

This week, however, as Romeo languished in a Turkish jail, telling journalists that his young "bride" was pregnant, and Juliet, hounded by the law, threatened to go on hunger strike if she was forced to leave him, the affair was teetering on the brink of a tragedy worthy of Stratford-upon-Avon's finest.

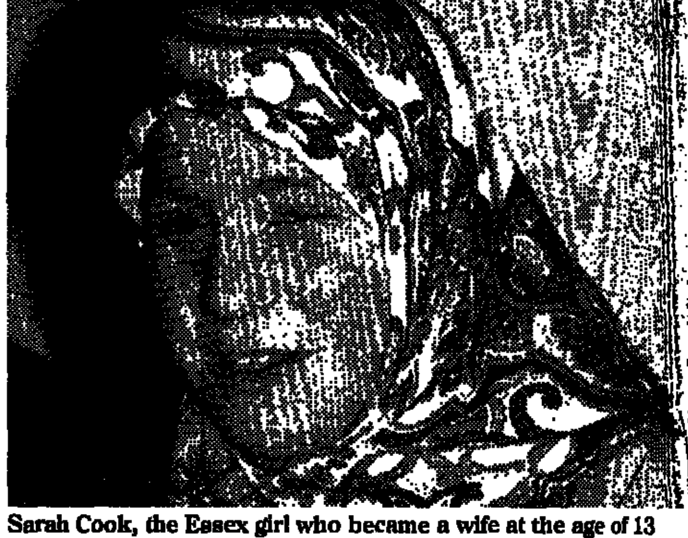
The first anyone knew of the dumpy teenager from Braintree was last week when the world awoke to the broad smiles of the newly wed Mr and Mrs Komeagac splashed across the newspapers, their arms wrapped around each other, a Muslim headscarf wrapped around Sarah's ginger curls.

It was a story, claimed the Sun, which reportedly paid £20,000 for the exclusive, that would shock every parent in Britain — a typically extravagant claim, but which for once, was within hailing distance of the truth.

While her contemporaries at her school were still squeezing their spots and pondering the mysteries of the French kiss, Sarah Cook had married a Turkish boy. And it was with the consent of her parents.

It began while Sarah was on a family holiday last June in the Turkish resort of Alanya. Musa was a waiter in the Hotel Hamburg. Their eyes met across the restaurant, then it was a meeting on the beach. There was kissing and cuddling, and at some point Musa proposed.

The holiday came to an end but the romance didn't. There were long, teary telephone calls and lovesick outbursts. There was desperate pestering until Sarah's mother Jackie, aged 39, agreed to fly back with her to Turkey for another holiday later that year.



Sarah Cook, the Essex girl who became a wife at the age of 13

The family was split. On their return, they persuaded Sarah's father to let her fly out to be with Musa. Weeks later, Sarah and Musa were married in a Muslim ceremony attended by both sets of parents.

"She did what she wanted to do — that's her wish. We just went along with her dreams," Sarah's father Adrian, aged 42, said.

Though it may be strictly illegal in Turkey, marriages of girls as young as 12 and 13 are in fact common in rural areas, where families are large, and the dowries paid by grooms to their bride's relatives are desperately needed. And such families have a worthy precedent. The holy prophet Mohammed took his second wife, Ayse, when she was nine.

Elsewhere in the world — in parts of Africa, India and Pakistan — child marriages are common.

Even in Britain, there were the two Birmingham girls, 14-year-old Nadia and Zana Muhsen, aged 15, who were sold as Yemeni child brides by their father to the sons of two friends for £1,300 each.

But in this case it is a 13-year-old British girl who has been "handed over" by her parents not only to an under-age marriage, but to a foreign — Islamic — culture.

But in Turkey, Sarah and Musa, who is facing a charge of rape with a possible five years in prison, have become a *cause célèbre*. Turkish newspapers have opposed Britain's "meddling" in the affair — the High Court order summoning her back to Britain — and have called for the couple to be left to pursue their lives together.

For them, it is a Romeo and Juliet love affair — the youthful protagonists divided not by a family feud but by different cultures, East v West, Islam v Christianity.

In Ankara, Istanbul and Kahramanmaras, the reaction is one of bemusement that a society which condones giving condoms to under-age youngsters can be outraged by a couple who marry in a religious ceremony attended by both sets of parents.

ALI SEZAL, mayor of Kahramanmaras, who has led a campaign in support of the couple, crowning Sarah bride of the city and her "husband" groom of the nation, said: "A British girl has chosen our faith, that's what the fuss is about."

Such is the level of local feeling that when Sarah walks in the town she has made her home, she is mobbed by supporters who applaud and give her presents. Turkish supporters have laid a bouquet of carnations in front of the British consulate in Istanbul with the message: "Tolerance for Love", urging that she should be allowed to stay in Turkey.

One can only hope that this late 20th century version of star-crossed love comes to a happier conclusion than its Shakespearean precursor.

Britain's Chief Rabbi fights call to resign

Madeleine Bunting

THE Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, suffered the worst setback of his career when he was publicly urged to resign by one of the most influential members of the Jewish community.

The millionaire founder of the Dixons retail chain, Sir Stanley Kalms, told the Chief Rabbi that he was more suited to academic life and warned that under his leadership, Anglo-Jewry was fast becoming an irrelevance under the "dead hand of reactionary attitudes".

The unprecedented public humiliation of the leader of Britain's 200,000 Orthodox Jews in the Jewish Chronicle brings into the open the increasing exasperation in the community with the Chief Rabbi's leadership at a time when Orthodox membership is declining significantly.

Sir Stanley said: "Rabbi Sacks has great oratorical skills, but inhibited in his outpourings, the words hardly fill the appetites of Anglo-Jewry. We are in a time-warp."

Sir Stanley articulates widespread criticism of the Chief Rabbi in the Jewish community, singling out three issues on which he accuses him of having reneged on electoral pledges: greater tolerance of different interpretations of Judaism, equality for women, and peace in the Middle East.

Rosalind Preston, one of the most prominent Orthodox women in the community, said: "I can understand Kalms's frustration and I would agree that we need a major improvement in talking to Jews of other persuasions. I would like a debate honestly faced in our community." But she added that she was fully in support of the Chief Rabbi.

Communal bickering is cited by young Jews in opinion polls as a major factor deterring them from active involvement: a key concern to the long-term demographic survival of Orthodoxy in England as an increasing number of young Jews are choosing to marry outside their faith.

The Chief Rabbi has frequently run into controversies over his attitude to different sections of the Jewish community, Reform, Masorti and Liberal Judaism. Most recently, he equivocated as to whether Orthodox rabbis should be even allowed to attend an educational conference at Christmas where there would be Reform rabbis. A year ago, Dr Sacks provoked fury by an astonishing attack on the Masorti.

It is widely recognised that Dr Sacks is under immense pressure from the ultra-Orthodox who dominate the rabbinical court of the Beth Din.

Graduate tax proposed

PLANS for a tax on graduates to recoup part of the cost of student maintenance and tuition are being prepared amid tight security on both Conservative and Labour front benches for publication in a few months, *writes John Carvel.*

The proposal breaches the principle that students are not charged fees for a first degree and runs counter to the fashion for cutting taxes rather than inventing them.

Under the "income-contingent" loan scheme, part of the cost of higher education would be transferred to the undergraduate and funded by a more generous student loan, repayable through tax or national insurance after the student graduated and was earning enough to afford the monthly installments.

● The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals this week circulated plans to charge an emergency £300 levy on first-year undergraduates unless the Government pledges to reverse the latest round of higher education spending cuts.

The committee was to decide on Friday whether to tell ministers that the levy will be imposed in September 1997 unless the Government agrees to introduce an income-contingent loan scheme before 2000.

Major takes the gloves off

Michael White

JOHN MAJOR on Monday took the gloves off in his fight back against Tony Blair and accused the Labour party of repeatedly undermining the Government's efforts to deter, capture and punish criminals who "flout our laws and spurn our moral code".

Hoping to capitalise on last week's Conservative charges of hypocrisy over Harriet Harman's choice of school for her son, Mr Major insisted that the Opposition's response was the same on law and order, a topic which ministers intend to make a central theme of their re-election campaign.

"No matter what they [Labour] say about crime, they persistently do something else. Day by day, Labour show themselves in their real colours. And the colour they reveal is not soft focus blue, it is the colour of envy and hypocrisy," said Mr Major.

"I don't believe in a harsh society, but I do believe in a self-disciplined society," he explained. Tory officials said later that Mr Major hopes to wrong-foot Mr Blair by challenging him to match his tough rhetoric and help to get the forthcoming Criminal Justice Bill through Parliament on a fast-track.

The shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, led a counter-attack against what he called the smears, dirty tricks and spurious accusations which will come from "the Tory lie machine" as election day approaches.

Mr Major must have known he would be accused of diminishing his office if he appeared to endorse Michael Heseltine's earlier jibe that Labour is "the villain's friend".

Though his language was milder, the Prime Minister used a Conservative Political Centre (CPC) lecture in London to associate himself with it and with Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, in his clash with senior judges over tackling the crime wave.

In a taunt directed at Mr Blair's best known slogan, he suggested that Labour is still too concerned with the rights of criminals rather than victims and with insisting that "absolutely everything is responsible for crime" except the people who commit it.

"Punishment is not a dirty word. In my book, being tough on crime means being tough on criminals," he said.

Mr Major confirmed that the controversial package unveiled by the Home Secretary at last October's Tory conference, including a curb on early release from prison and automatic life sentences for serious second offences, will emerge in a white paper in April or May.

With Labour co-operation, it could be law by the autumn, aides said, in a clear hint that ministers will use it to prove Labour feebleness.

Though Mr Major told his CPC audience that the Education Secretary, Gillian Shephard, was reviewing "sanctions available to schools" — including powers of detention and exclusion — there was little new of substance in his repetition of earlier pledges to build five secure training centres for 12 to 14-year-olds and to put 5,000 more police on the beat. Both face budgetary problems.

What was sharper was the tone of his rhetoric, designed, some MPs thought, both to out-tough New Labour and to distract attention from the Conservatives' record — a 160 per cent increase in burglary and 400 per cent rise in violent crime since 1979, as John Prescott said in exchanges with Mr Heseltine at Question Time.

Mr Major's speech lacked social context other than the need to pass on moral values and to stop children going down the "slippery slope" which starts with truancy.

"For every crime there's a victim. For that victim, that crime isn't a dry statistic. It's something personal," he said. "For every crime, there's a criminal. Not a product of society, but an individual who has made a conscious decision to harm someone for personal gain. And every crime is wrong."

Jack Straw, shadow home secretary, said that after 17 years Mr Major's remarks amounted to "a monumental admission of failure".

Comment, page 12

In Brief

A £4 BILLION contract to supply the United Arab Emirates with long-range strike aircraft is slipping from Britain's grasp because London will not agree to put British troops under Arab command.

THE BBC World Service reaches a record 140 million adults each week in more than 100 countries, according to the latest figures announced three months after the Government slashed its budget by £20 million.

THE MINISTRY of Defence is to announce fresh efforts to isolate the medical causes of Gulf war syndrome after pressure from veterans who suspect their children's birth defects can be traced back to it.

MOHAMMAD Sarwar's hopes of becoming Britain's first Muslim MP rose when Labour said that it was re-examining all 485 postal votes in the Glasgow Govan nomination contest.

THE SOCIAL Security Secretary, Peter Lilley, told the Commons that the estimated £150 million a year lost through social security books frauds will be virtually eliminated once they are replaced by smart cards.

RICHARD MORLEY, who is appealing a deportation ruling against his charge, Jayaram Khadka, said he wanted the appeals tribunal to help him fulfil a pledge to the boy's Nepalese father who saved his life.

IN THE same week that the Metropolitan police paid out nearly £90,000 in damages and legal costs to three people who claimed they were assaulted by officers in London's Soho, a fraud inquiry slated the police for their handling of a case in which an accountant who stole £5 million from the Met was under suspicion six years before he was arrested.

PEOPLE should budget for up to £40,000 on residential or nursing home care in their old age, John Bowis, the junior health minister said. Such a bill was "manageable" for most people in view of the realisable assets in increased home ownership, he said.

DOZENS of tree top protesters living along the proposed route of the Newbury bypass were expecting to be evicted after a High Court judge granted possession orders against them.

KATE ATKINSON won the Whitbread Book of the Year award for her first novel, Behind The Scenes At The Museum, beating the favourite, Salman Rushdie.

LEARNER drivers are rushing to book tests before written exams are introduced on July 1.

Education emerges as a key vote-winner

Guardian Reporters

PARTY LEADERS have chosen education as their main battleground as the current phoney election campaign intensifies.

John Major and Tony Blair are gearing up for a prolonged battle over Britain's increasingly troubled education system after Labour's controversy over selective grammar schools and the Government's flagship policies for toddlers, schoolchildren and college students all came under sustained assault.

This week Mr Blair sought to regain control of the debate by promising reforms designed to ensure bright students can forge ahead within a comprehensive system.

He argued that bright children within comprehensives should be allowed to be taught in classrooms with older children. "Today we need a system where students forge ahead in areas of strength, breaking down the traditional equation of ages and stages."

The proposals are a rejection of what he describes as "the traditional factory model of education" in which all children "are assumed to proceed at broadly similar speed in every subject".

In a speech at Southwark Cathedral in south London to mark the tenth anniversary of the churches' Faith In The City report, he proposed extra help for failing inner-city schools by twinning them with more successful schools, and by making experience in sink schools a condition of swift promotion for teachers.

At the same time, Mr Blair sought to reassure advocates of comprehensive education by insisting that there would be no return to the 11 plus.

Teachers were quick to criticise Tony Blair's "half-baked" ideas for fast-track schooling for bright pupils, saying they would create big problems for schools.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, said fast-tracking might be appropriate for a few individuals but produced huge organisational problems for schools. Results had proved disappointing in the past, and children were too immature when they reached the sixth form.

Labour rebutted jibes from the deputy prime minister, Michael Heseltine, in the Commons on Monday that his plans were "accelerated hypocrisy" and that Mr Blair had changed his mind about streaming children.

Twice last week, the two party leaders were engaged in a head-to-head clash on education in the Commons which saw the Prime Minister winning ecstatic backbench praise for worsting the Opposition leader over double standards, but left Mr Blair convinced that educational opportunities for all remains a key Labour vote-winner.

Grounds for Labour confidence, despite the roasting it suffered over Harriet Harman's choice of a selective grammar school for her son — "the toughest week I have had since becoming leader," Mr Blair said — came on several fronts as ministers took a policy beating.

The political career of the shadow health secretary, Ms Harman, appeared to have been salvaged by the end of the week. But this was only after she gave a belated apology to her colleagues, and Mr Blair had expended considerable reserves of goodwill in an impassioned appeal to his party to pull together.



Later in the week, Government plans to give nursery vouchers for every four-year-old were called into question by an Audit Commission report warning of a black market developing as £750 million in coupons pass from hundreds of thousands of parents to 40,000 pre-school establishments.

It raised doubts about whether legislation to promote a more competitive pre-school market could achieve the Government's aim of increasing nursery provision.

Meanwhile, Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, announced dismal results from the first national tests of 11-year-olds, showing more than half failing to reach the expected standard in English and maths. She acknowledged the performance was disappointing and told primary schools they must do better.

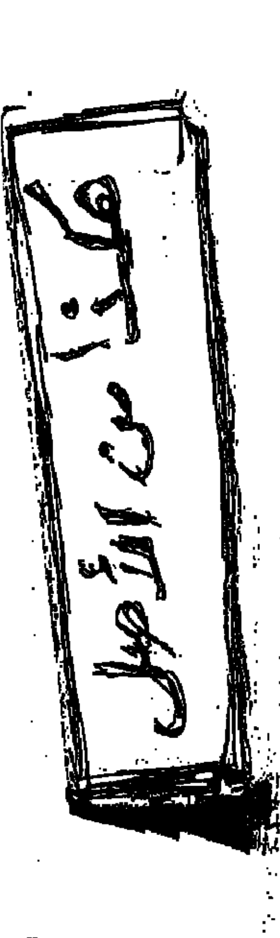
And the universities tried to come to terms with a £500 million funding cut over the next three academic years, as lecturers called on the vice-chancellors and students to join them in a national one-day stoppage.

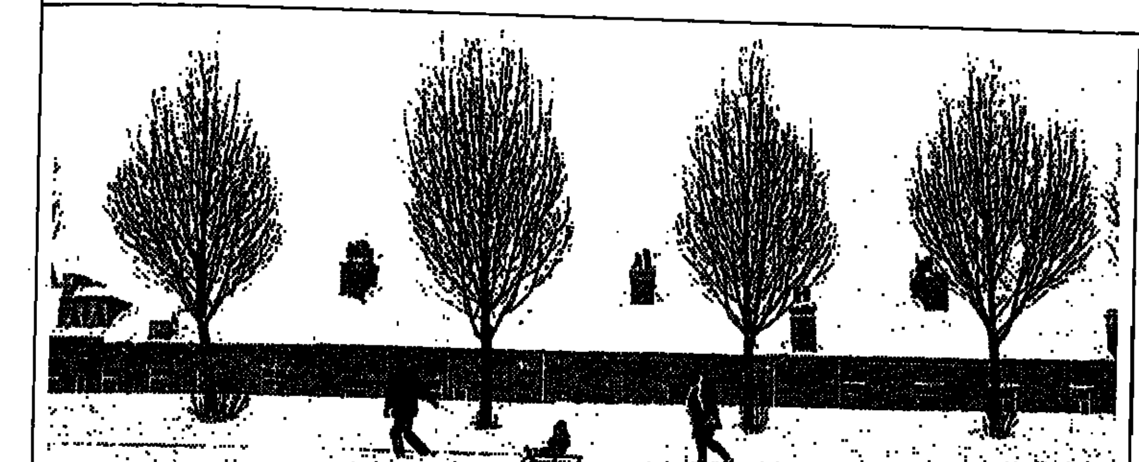
Mr Blair took a high-risk decision to resume his attacks on education in the wake of the Harman furore. He called the results "appalling" and an indictment of government policies.

"These are children born under a Conservative government, sent to school under a Conservative government, educated under a Conservative government. The failure is not their's but the Conservative government's."

Mr Major hit back with his second powerful performance of last week: "If it is the Conservative government that has failed, perhaps you can explain why some of your friends remove their children from Labour education authorities and have them educated in Conservative ones?"

Tory MPs believe they have Labour leaders on the run on a symbolic issue and promised a campaign to highlight "say one thing, do another" hypocrisy over crime, housing, welfare and other policies.





Snowed under . . . Several people died over the weekend, mainly in road accidents, as cold weather and freezing winds of up 35mph blew in from Russia. Meanwhile, the newly privatised National Grid narrowly avoided blackouts after weather-related and gas supply problems PHOTOGRAPH: TIM SMITH

Gas complaints double in a year

Simon Beavis

THE crisis gripping British Gas deepened this week with the release of new figures showing official customer complaints against the privatised company more than doubled last year to rise to their highest level since 1987.

According to one of the company's watchdogs, the Gas Consumers Council, it received 49,104 complaints last year, 102 per cent more than in 1994. Of these, nearly three-quarters were from customers who had complained before and had turned to the GCC after failing to get a satisfactory answer.

Gripes about bills dominated the rising number of complaints in a year which the watchdog said had been "rotten" for British Gas and for its customers.

There was a public outcry over top salaries after chief executive Cedric Brown received a 75 per cent pay rise at a time when 25,000 job cuts were being pushed through.

The company ended the year facing a financial crisis over £40 billion of long-term contracts for high-priced gas it cannot sell because of the rapid emergence of competition and a plunge in spot prices for gas.

Meanwhile, the company at the centre of Britain's drought crisis has been criticised by a government inspector for inadequate preparations.

A report released by the Department of the Environment says Yorkshire Water did not act urgently enough when the scale of the shortage last November became clear.

● Strike action threatens the water and electricity industries for the first time since privatisation after United Utilities said it was to de-recognise unions in one of its core operations and embark on a new round of job cuts. Union leaders immediately announced plans to ballot 3,000 workers at the Warrington-based company for strike action.

Prison psychiatrist quits over 'harshness' of policy

Alan Travis

A SENIOR prison psychiatrist who has spent five years working with the most dangerous inmates in Britain last week quit the prison service in protest at Michael Howard's austere penal policy.

In a passionate open letter of resignation, Bob Johnson told the Home Secretary that the "harshness of your current prison policy has finally ground my therapeutic endeavours at Parkhurst to a sickening halt — I must now resign on principle".

His resignation strikes at repeated assurances by Mr Howard that the loss of almost 3,000 prison jobs because of reductions in jail budgets will not undercut regimes designed to confront the offending behaviour of prisoners.

The special unit at Parkhurst has held the most dangerous prisoners in Britain who are not only violent and disruptive but also have psychiatric problems. They are the inmates that Broadmoor special hospital and the Grendon therapeutic prison will not accept.

The specialist team of prison officers working on the unit in Parkhurst's C wing says it has reduced violent incidents by 90 per cent in the past five years and reduced medication used from 3.5 kilograms to only 150 grams a year.

Dr Johnson believes that for many violent prisoners the root cause of their crimes lie in childhood trauma or abuse.

A former GP who qualified as a psychiatrist to take on a low-paid job no one else would touch, he questions the Home Secretary's entire "prison works" philosophy.

"Unless the prison system insists that every wrongdoer discovers why they offended, and vigorously encourages them to change, it cannot be other than an expensive way of making things worse."

Two weeks ago the unit's fate was sealed when the Prison Service ruled that no more top security category A prisoners could be held at Parkhurst since its security grading was reduced to category B.

The category A prisoners from the special unit are now among the 20 or so inmates subject to "continuous assessment" in the prison service. Under a policy known as shared misery, these prisoners who are the most disruptive, are moved every three months from jail to jail and held in solitary confinement.

● The Prison Service is introducing part-time staff to cover weekends, "selective reductions" in jail regimes, and a "special ideas scheme" with prizes for the best cost-cutting suggestions as part of the public spending package cutting 2,800 jobs.

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Fax an affront to House, say MPs

David Hencke

PETER PRESTON, the former editor of the Guardian, and the newspaper "were guilty of unwise and improper conduct" in forging a letter purporting to come from Jonathan Aitken, a former Cabinet minister, but no action will be taken against him, the Commons Privileges Committee ruled this week.

The committee condemns the former editor's action as an affront to the House. It adds: "It is unacceptable for anyone other than a Member of Parliament or a person acting on that member's authority to use official notepaper. It is even more unacceptable when the notepaper and a signature is used deliberately to give the impression that that authority has been given."

The report declines to go into the circumstances surrounding the use of what became known as the "cod fax" which was sent to obtain the the former minister's bill at the Ritz Hotel, Paris, as part of an inquiry into Mr Aitken's stay there with two Arab businessmen.

Wider allegations involving payments to MPs made by Mohamed Al-Fayed, owner of Harrods and the Ritz, in private evidence to the committee, have been deleted from the report. Instead MPs have sent the evidence to Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, so that it can be investigated by the new committee of privileges and standards.

Mr Preston, in evidence to MPs, apologised for using the fax. He said that he had sent it to protect his source. The telephone and fax numbers used were the Guardian's. Inquiries were being made in the public interest because Mr Aitken was not giving straightforward answers.

"I felt one was asking legitimate questions but was not being given straightforward answers."

Lottery 'foil for arts cuts'

TREASURY ministers used public ignorance of lottery rules to create a smokescreen behind which they could cut cash for the arts, Lord Gowrie, a former Conservative minister, claimed last week, *writes Michael Ellison.*

Lord Gowrie, who is chairman of the Arts Council, which distributes taxpayers' money, confirmed that he had found a way of beating the Government's attempt to deprive the arts of £5 million.

The grant subsidises the operation of arts organisations, but most lottery money can be used only for buildings. This year's cash had been cut to £186.2 million, but the £5 million gap has been more than made up by the council's charging £4.3 million for dealing with lottery applications and closing a £1 million contingency fund.

"We are still more than £5 million worse off this year in real terms," said Lord Gowrie. "We recognised the difficulties which standstill will cause. A number of important organisations are on the brink of closure. Almost all are in their fourth consecutive year of squeeze."

Ex-officer 'nobbled' jury

Duncan Campbell

A FORMER policeman was jailed for seven years last week after what is believed to be the first jury "nobbling" case involving an ex-officer to come to trial.

The conviction comes as a bill goes to the House of Lords which would allow for a retrial in a case where jurors or witnesses have been interfered with.

John Young, aged 45, was jailed at a London crown court for attempting to pervert the course of justice by demanding £30,000 to try to tamper with a jury in an Old Bailey case last year.

Young had offered to supply information about the jury to the sister of one of the four defendants so that favourable verdicts could be secured. There was no suggestion that the defendants themselves had been involved in the plot, and three of them were convicted and jailed for up to 20 years on kidnapping, robbery, and firearms charges.

The woman contacted her brother's solicitor and the police were then informed. The money demanded by Young was taken in a carrier bag to a pay-off meeting. Young was taped saying that he could supply all the jurors' addresses, which he had obtained through an unidentified officer.

● Several north London police officers could face charges after an inquest jury last week returned a verdict of unlawful killing on a Nigerian asylum seeker who was put in a neck hold and died of asphyxiation.

The case — which prompted the coroner, Stephen Chan, to call on police to speed up warnings to officers on the dangers of using neck holds when restraining suspects — follows a series of deaths in custody in London.

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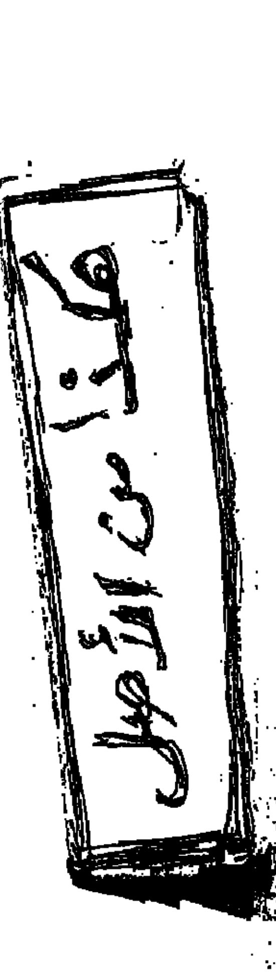
Adieu to Moruroa and nuclear tests

HAVING exploded what may possibly be the last in its current series of nuclear tests at Moruroa at the weekend, France should now stick to its word and turn its attention to banning them. Outlawing nuclear tests has been on the international agenda for four decades but little progress has been made since Kennedy and Khrushchev failed to do a deal back in 1963. Yet, if the political will is there, the 1996 session of the Conference on Disarmament, now getting down to brass tacks in Geneva, should still be the forum for finally achieving a comprehensive test ban treaty. The signs are certainly more promising than ever before: France and the US, followed by Britain, have declared themselves ready to accept what the scientists call "zero-yield" testing, forgoing the Nevada desert and Pacific atolls for the computer simulation techniques they need to maintain their arsenals. Russia, observing a testing moratorium, is expected to follow suit.

China, with less advanced weapons than other members of the nuclear club, is the next problem. Its continued insistence on "peaceful nuclear explosions", ostensibly for civil engineering purposes, may be tactical. But Beijing's current truculence is worrying and no one will relax in Geneva until it too has come on board. The timing of one of its two tests last year — just days after pledging "utmost restraint" during negotiations on the indefinite extension of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty — was deliberate nose-thumbing.

Outside the club some countries are bridling at the nuclear powers' attempt to pursue the test ban without making concessions on disarmament. India has linked progress on a global treaty to negotiations this year on eliminating all nuclear weapons within a specified time. Yet as a "threshold state", along with Pakistan and Israel, that wishes to maintain its capability to manufacture weapons, its position may be more about bargains than principles.

The US and Britain insist there should be no linkage between the treaty and future moves on nuclear disarmament. "Holding one important goal hostage for another is a sure way to fail at both," conference delegates were told last week by John Holum, director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Incremental progress in such a high-risk area is a sensible way to proceed. But since no one pretends that a test ban treaty will in itself eliminate nuclear weapons, some signal should be given of readiness to move further. Australia is trying to bridge gaps in Geneva while its own Canberra commission of international nuclear experts is sending out the simple but compelling message: disarmament cannot wait for ever.



Keeping war crimes in focus

RIGHTLY, the United States is trying to deter European Union countries from normalising relations with Belgrade. Diplomatic recognition of the rump Yugoslav Federation of Serbia and Montenegro would be a significant step towards the restoration of international legitimacy to President Milosevic. But even though EU foreign ministers on Monday decided to postpone recognition, their timing depends on normalisation between Serbia and Macedonia, and will go ahead despite US reservations. This is a false tactic. Recognition would deprive Nato countries of a valuable lever to secure compliance by Belgrade with the Dayton agreement's provisions for the pursuit of war criminals. Diplomatic recognition would also make it still less likely that Mr Milosevic himself could ever be indicted for war crimes.

Judge Goldstone, the chief prosecutor for the International Tribunal on War Crimes in Yugoslavia, is complaining that Belgrade is withholding all co-operation in the search for war criminals. The judge has been similarly frustrated in Zagreb, where President Tudjman is equally reluctant to arrest war criminals and is ignoring US pressure to act. But by no means all the blame for Judge Goldstone's lack of progress lies with the Serbian and Croatian leadership. Nato governments themselves have failed to give the tribunal the priority it deserves. Admittedly, they face a dilemma. President Clinton has proclaimed that "no one is exempt" from investigation, and that includes those who endorse atrocities without physical participation. Yet the Nato allies also need Mr Milosevic and Mr Tudjman in implementing the Dayton agreement, where war crimes are only one aspect of a much broader whole.

The Nato military are also frustrating Judge Goldstone's task. His investigators are receiving little help in their attempts to prevent the grizzly evidence of mass graves from being destroyed before the full facts can be established. The military commanders are even more opposed to involvement in the arrest of suspects. They assert that I-For's identification with the tribunal would be courting reprisals and unnecessary danger for their soldiers. However, the war crimes process is too important to be thwarted. Nato governments must give more decisive backing to Judge Goldstone. It is as wrong now as it was in 1945 to contend that scarce resources are better devoted to rebuilding shattered countries than to raking over the past. After 1945, war crimes trials and the exposure of individual mass murderers were vital to the healing process in Europe. The same applies to Bosnia, and to Croatia, today. The tribunal deserves the support of all who profess to seek peace and stability in the Balkans.

The wrong arm of the law

MICHAEL HOWARD is angry with Labour for opposing Conservative criminal justice policies. And so is the Prime Minister. But why? The person who has done more to tear up Conservative law and order policies is not Tony Blair — nor Jack Straw — but Mr Howard himself. It was he, not Labour, who reversed the bipartisan policies painstakingly put together by a succession of Conservative home secretaries. The two main parties had reached a hidden consensus, which involved more emphasis on crime prevention, support for victims, extra probation officers, more supervision and non-custodial programmes as well as prison. It was one of Mr Howard's Conservative predecessors, the hardline David Waddington, who reluctantly concluded that prison was "an expensive way of making bad people worse". It was Mr Howard who tore up the policies set out in the Waddington/Hurd white paper.

Breaking with his five predecessors, Mr Howard decided "prison works". Moreover, he fatuously believes the key to crime control is legislation. Hence his anger on Monday at Labour's amendment to various bills and his eagerness to produce a string of his own Acts. If he would only listen to Lord Justice Rose, who spoke last year to a Home Office sponsored conference, wryly noting that in the 60 years up to 1985 there were six criminal justice acts but since 1986 there have been six more. Crime is not controlled by legislation as the statistics demonstrate. Mr Howard is right to say the official crime statistics have fallen by 5 per cent for two successive years; what he fails to note is the record rises of 13, 18 and 11 per cent in the three preceding years. Just to eliminate these increases — an extra 1.7 million crimes — would take another six years at the current rate.

The serious speech on crime on Monday was delivered not by the Prime Minister but by the Leader of the Opposition. The roots of crime — as the Government's own researchers noted last month — are deep, and directly connected to the economic and social conditions of the country. In his speech celebrating the tenth anniversary of Faith in the City, the report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Commission on Urban Priority Areas, Tony Blair was right to repeat its earlier warnings and set out how the social and economic inequalities of a decade ago have widened. Crime is not solved by criminal justice Acts but, as Faith in the City argued, by an across-the-board push on unemployment, housing, education, community development and crime. All are important, but Mr Blair was right to spend most time on education, the crucial ladder for people wanting to escape from inner city deprivation.

Like Faith in the City, the Blair sermon is likely to fall on deaf Tory ears. Ministers seem to have only one crime objective: labelling Labour as the villain's friend. But it won't wash with the electorate. The polls still show the public have much more confidence in Labour's crime control policies than the Government's. And Gallup has shown the public is genuinely alarmed that Conservative social policies will perpetuate "high levels of lawlessness".

Another hurdle put in the way of Irish peace

David Sharrock

DURING the height of the first Home Rule campaign, which began more than a century ago, it was said that good English politics make bad Irish politics. Last week John Major gave us the perfect illustration that history has a habit of repeating itself, and managed to insult an eminent panel of international figures into the bargain.

In Dublin last week there were no post-Mitchell parties, as might have been expected in the few hours between publication of the report of the international body on arms decommissioning and Mr Major's statement to the Commons, when the storm clouds that are normally gathered on Ulster's horizon briefly lifted. The mood instead was of anger, gloom and not a little despair. "Major's just told the Provos: 'Right, you've just completed the hurdle race lads, now please can you do it again, only backwards this time'," said a senior government source.

From Sinn Fein there was the most ominous sound of all. Silence. This from a party whose spokespeople have become used to dominating the headlines, always armed with a rapid response to the latest political twist. And from General John de Chastelain the reaction was the most diplomatically expressed "surprise" at Mr Major's reaction to the report on which he, recently retired as Chief of Canadian Defence Staff, the former Finnish prime minister, Harri Holkeri, and President Clinton's special envoy, George Mitchell, have laboured so hard for five weeks.

Mr Major stunned Irish opinion by extracting from the report's penultimate page a new precondition to bringing Sinn Fein into all-party talks. The Mitchell commission's view was that an "elective process could contribute to the building of confidence". Mr Major translated this into a preparedness on his part to urgently bring forward legislation for elections.

There are now two roads to all-party talks. A start to decommissioning — which the Mitchell commission concluded will not happen — or elections to a body or assembly, the shape of which remains undefined. No mention of any of the other sensible proposals that the commission came up with to move everybody towards negotiation and trust. Within hours of its reports being published, it seemed that Mr Major had consigned all but one of its paragraphs to the dustbin.

In spite of Mr Major's discourtesy, it is worth taking the time to reflect on what the Mitchell report offered. It is imbued with compromise — the very spirit in which the IRA leadership called its ceasefire almost a year and a half ago, a development which they said was designed "to enhance the democratic process". By setting out six principles as a democratic test which the parties must pass, the Mitchell report has brought the question that lay behind the weapons issue full circle.

Affirming a "total and absolute commitment" to "democratic and exclusively peaceful means", "to renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations" and finally to abide by the outcome of those talks or to use purely peaceful means in trying to alter them amounts to an implicit but crucial acceptance of the principle of consent. If Sinn Fein, and the IRA, accept, then John Major's original question — "is the ceasefire permanent?" — has been answered.

The report's rejection of Mr Major's demand for an arms gesture on weapons before talks was being played to maximum effect by Sinn Fein — before the election route was unveiled. That is hardly surprising. People who have taken enormous personal risks for peace need to show that it is paying dividends. English politicians have short memories when it comes to Ireland. Was it really only a year ago that the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, solemnly told a group of sixth-formers in Hampstead, north London, that the Government must support the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, to prevent him being replaced by a hard-liner and "taking a long walk on a short plank"?

All-party talks have taken on a totemic symbolism for Mr Adams and his colleagues at the head of the republican movement. It was for this that the IRA called its ceasefire. By entering talks "without preconditions" and sitting down "with all the parties on this island" it will have fulfilled a crucially important item on its agenda. Republicans need never again fear being marginalised or demonised.

SEVENTEEN months have elapsed. Church leaders of all denominations — so often the moderating balm in Northern Ireland — are becoming anxious about the time which has gone by with so little to show.

The Mitchell trio further helped Mr Adams by stressing in their comments that there is no question of surrender and that risks must be taken by all sides. In its scenario republicans can walk with dignity to the table to join their political enemies.

But even before they sit down it is evident to an objective eye how little Sinn Fein can expect to gain out of those talks. The "historic compromise" presaged by the IRA's August 1994 ceasefire announcement will eventually lead to a new Northern Ireland power-sharing assembly, a strong institutional north-south link, but no diminution of the province's status within the United Kingdom until a majority of its citizens so choose.

The report suggests that some decommissioning might take place during the course of all-party talks, a compromise between the Government's "weapons first" and Sinn Fein's "weapons last". None of this, the actual handover of weapons or the principles which take an axe to the roots of traditional republican theology, would be easy for Mr Adams to sell to his movement, yet it lies in the realms of possibility.

It is time for the Prime Minister to submit the Unionist leader, David Trimble, to even a fraction of the pressure that Mr Adams has endured for the past two years and persuade Unionists that now is the time to talk.

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Le Pen's friendly face of hatred

Immigrants are suffering in the National Front's French bastion as a personality cult surrounding its leader lures more votes. **Adam Sage** reports from Toulon

DANIEL HALTER leant on his flower stall in the southern French town of Toulon, spitting racial hatred. "The Arabs are everywhere," he said. "They are invading us and they are bringing drugs and crime with them."

Mr Halter may be prejudiced and unpleasant but last weekend he felt vindicated. Four days earlier, he learned that his application for a council flat would be given priority treatment, ahead of the Muslims he hates.

The reason? He is a beneficiary of the open discrimination practised by the ultra-right National Front (NF), which won control of Toulon — a city the size of Portsmouth — in a landmark victory in last June's municipal elections.

Promising to implement the ideas of its demagogic but increasingly popular leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the party said French nationals among the 160,000 population would be favoured over immigrants.

As the first concrete effects of this programme — dubbed "national preference" — start to appear, Mr Halter, aged 46, is jubilant. "I wrote to the mayor on January 12 and I got a positive letter back within a fortnight. It was never like this before," he said.

Bechir has also noticed the change, though he is far from jubilant. Like Mr Halter, his Tunisian-born parents recently applied for a council home. Unlike Mr Halter, they stand little chance. "They told us they could find nothing for us," Bechir, aged 18, said. "It is obvious that, as soon as they see our names, our dossier will be pushed to the bottom of the pile."

To a growing number of voters such policies appear attractive. Benefiting from widespread disillusion with mainstream leaders, Mr Le Pen polled more than 15 per cent in the presidential election last year. His success was followed by the NF's victory in Toulon, as well as two other big cities in the south, Orange and Marignane.

Since then, the extremist movement seems to have progressed even further amid mounting frustration at the failure of the Gaullist president, Jacques Chirac, to reduce the unemployment total of almost 3 million. In a recent by-election, the NF scored more than 40 per cent. And an opinion poll last week suggested that, across the country, its support continues to grow and that, if legislative elections were held, it would get a higher share of the vote than it has before.

If so, Toulon is likely to be in the vanguard of a national trend. Or so Franck Giletti believes. Sitting in his first-floor office at the *mairie*, not far from the harbour round which the Mediterranean city has grown, he offers the modern face of the ultra-right. Earnest, elegant and articulate, dressed in a smart blue shirt and red tie, he appears far removed from the skinheads associated with the NF in Britain.

Elected to the council last June at the age of 22, Mr Giletti uses phrases that at first seem banal, concentrating on the need to "give a Provençal soul back to Toulon", to "restore the city centre" and to "reduce the council's debt".

Question him further, however, and another language emerges — a language that is altogether less reassuring. Giving a soul to Toulon means: "We will take care that a certain immigrant population does not install itself in the market. After all, tom-toms do not have anything to do with Provençe." And if the city centre needs to be renovated, it is because "you can see more couscous restaurants than traditional shops".

If his instincts against Muslims are barely disguised, he is far more guarded on the subject of Jews. His comments, however, are revealing.

"We are not more anti-Semitic than anyone else," he said. "But we ask certain questions. With certain people in France, we do not know really where they position themselves. Are they on the side of Israel or on France? In the case of a conflict with Israel, whose side would they be on?"

Catching them young . . . Franck Giletti, elected to Toulon council at the age of 22, helps to put up posters for the National Front's youth wing
PHOTOGRAPH: ANNE VAN DER STEGEN

Across the corridor, Jean Moura was careful not to venture on to such sensitive territory. Also a councillor, he is a retired headmaster whose manners and courtesy smack of a bygone age. If he is racist, he does not show it.

Like many of the party's followers, especially in southern France, he was born in Algeria and has bitter memories of the independence war that led to the messy process of decolonisation. He is a member of the NF because he believes it stands for values that disappeared with the empire — authority, discipline and a strong state.

"Those of us who lived in Algeria had a love of France that many French people no longer have," he said. "I am not an extremist." But the council's new "information" bulletin scarcely supports his claim to moderation.

Vitriolic in content, a recent issue ridiculed opposition councillors as "liars who treat the Toulonnais as imbeciles", and described the celebrated communist poet, Louis Aragon, as "an old collaborator who died senile in his bed".

For the North Africans who make up most of the city's immigrant population, such talk is worrying.

Bechir, a tall, soft-spoken teenager with a permanent smile, said: "It is as though the Front's victory has liberated racism. Take the national police. Even though they are not meant to be under the council's control, they have changed. At the moment, I get stopped and searched three or four times a day. They insult us, saying that we are dirty Arabs and that Hitler's work has to be finished, and things like that. That sort of thing sometimes happened before, but never to this extent. Among ordinary Toulonnais, the atmosphere has also changed. It is much worse."

If Mr Halter is anything to go by, Bechir is right. Walking round his stall in the central market that runs through Toulon, Mr Halter prefaced his anti-Muslim diatribe with the surprising declaration that he was a "socialist".

"There is no contradiction," he said. "It is the Arabs who are racist. They are anti-French. They do not want to integrate into the French way of life."

He was speaking on Thursday last week. A day later, in Paris, Mr Le Pen used his first press conference of 1996 to say much the same thing, though in rather more subtle terms. Repeating what has become the NF mantra of "unemployment, immigration and insecurity", he denounced the "thousands of young people recruited into gangs, ethnic gangs" in poor urban areas.

His comments may sound distasteful but they are effective. The personality cult the NF has built around him continues to grow. Propaganda tricks, such as a cartoon that portrays him as a war hero, a visionary and the saviour of his nation, appear outlandish. Yet they are lapped up by more and more people who feel ignored by complex, technical solutions proposed by other parties.

Carried away by his enthusiasm, Le Pen claimed that his movement was now France's second political force, behind the Gaullists. It was an exaggeration. Unless he can be stopped, however, it may one day prove correct.

But how to stop him? According to Claude Ardid, a journalist and author, Toulon offers an important case study. With an unemployment rate of 18 per cent, well above the national average, with the previous council enmeshed in corruption scandals, and with the mainstream parties hopelessly divided, the city provided fertile ground for Mr Le Pen's acolytes, he said.

Playing on racism and fear of crime, the NF was able to present itself as the only viable alternative.

Bechir said: "There are a lot of racists and quite a few idiots here. But if the other councillors had done their jobs properly, the NF would never have got through."
— *The Observer*

Riot police halt clash over abortion issue

Paul Webster in Paris

RIOT police intervened to stop fighting between supporters and opponents of abortion in Versailles during protests at the weekend that took place against the background of a political and judicial split over the application of the 1975 law legalising abortion.

The anti-abortionists had gathered in Versailles as leaders of SOS-Petits appealed in a local court against suspended jail sentences imposed for a raid on a clinic last year, one of dozens of commando raids in the last five years. The court deferred judgment.

Supporters of abortion claim that the opposition movement, which enjoys support among French cardinals, has become a focus of extreme rightwing activity led by the National Front.

The reluctance of some courts to enforce stiff sentences on the movement's activists in conformity with a 1993 Socialist law against hindering abortions has added to the suspicion that the Gaullist-led government is wary of upsetting a sector of its potential electorate, and is siding with the anti-abortion lobby.

Last week President Jacques Chirac voiced public support for large families as he presented an award to a mother of 10.

Some judges and public prosecutors have called for leniency towards the anti-abortion commandos — usually led by doctors — whose members chain themselves to equipment in operating theatres to disrupt surgery.

Other courts, however, have passed stiff sentences, notably in Valenciennes, where last week an assistant hospital director, Xavier Dousseau, was jailed for nine months. Members of his commando were given four-month sentences.

In Versailles, both sides complained about the inconsistency of sentencing, which has ranged from the severity of the Valenciennes judgment to a Paris court which passes light sentences on the recommendation of the state advocate-general, who represents the justice ministry.

After five years of violent campaigns, often involving priests and nuns, the most common penalty is a suspended prison sentence, such as that passed on Noelia Garcia last month at Maçon in Burgundy.

Ms Garcia was also fined $1,900. The case underlined her role as the emotional force of a movement which has successfully lobbied for the closure of family planning clinics in northern France.



Noelia Garcia: her image appeals to young recruits

Given that most of the militants are either middle-aged or retired, Ms Garcia at 21 has become the most easily recognised spokeswoman of the 15 associations involved in the commando raids, two of which have strong representation from the rightwing National Front.

She has exploited her glamorous image as a model, television actress and student at the Sorbonne to attract young recruits to the anti-abortion movement, and she regularly takes part in radio and television debates on abortion.

In Versailles she recalled that she had been given suspended jail sentences for four separate protests in hospitals that carry out about 180,000 abortions annually.

"It is time people took a responsible attitude to sex," she said. "Men are cowards and abortions lower the status of women. They have lost the right to be mothers." She added: "I am not being used politically, I am fighting for my own opinions."

She admitted that the movement had strong reactionary elements, including Vichyists and Pétainists, but denied that it was manipulated by the far right.

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Who's whistling the best tunes now?

A new range of economic ideas is emerging to underpin a new politics, argues **Will Hutton**



THE two great traditions in economic thought — Keynesian and laissez-faire — have fought themselves to a standstill. The so-called neo-classical counter-revolution that gained ascendancy over the past 20 years has at last run its course but, although the new Keynesians have arrested its intellectual advance, they have yet to turn their advantage into winning the policy debate. These are in-between times.

The right's setback is remarkable, especially as sheer momentum still allows it to set the political agenda and thus give the apparent impression it is intellectually dominant. But this is more because of the vigour of the attack by a wave of new-right economists, almost all of them from the United States, insisting that western capitalist economies had to return to first free-market principles if they were to break the log-jam of stagflation.

Vigour in argument has not been matched by subsequent economic performance — hence the growing vulnerability to counter-attack.

The counter-revolutionaries' campaign in the 1970s was two-pronged. Governments, they argued, should drop any attempt actively to manage the level of demand in the economy through fiscal policy (changing the gap between government spending and revenues) or monetary policy (changing interest rates and the liquidity in the financial system). All they should do was make sure the amount of money in circulation grew constantly to ensure minimal or no inflation.

Microeconomic policy should be focused solely on ensuring that market incentives were as pure as possible. In the US, in particular, a group of so-called "supply-siders" insisted that taxation was the major economic distortion blighting western economies.

Behind these claims — highly congenial to Conservatives everywhere — lay same fancy new economic theory. Discretionary macroeconomic policy of the type Keynes favoured was necessarily self-defeating, argued University of Chicago professors Milton Friedman and Robert Lucas throughout the 1970s. If governments tried to offset the effect of a recession or boom, then, paradoxically, the impact would be to make the next swing in the economic cycle more, not less, unstable.

Prof Lucas's theory of rational expectations argued, in essence, that, as long as markets work freely, economic agents never make other than short-term mistakes in understanding what is going on.

There is also the notion that the only good direction for taxation is down. This just about held up when inflation and interest rates were in double figures in the 1970s, so that, as Harvard's Professor Martin Feldstein showed, taxation of the high nominal interest rates paid to savers without adjusting for inflation meant that the real return on savings after inflation went negative — depressing the incentives to save and so hurting saving and investment levels.

It is obviously true that very high marginal rates of tax are deterrents to effort. But once inflation falls to low levels and high marginal tax rates are reduced, the tax-cutting supply-siders are left with little substantive proof for their claims.

As Professor Paul Krugman of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology argues, even the great homes of free-market economics like the University of Chicago never endorsed the wilder supply-siders' case. Today, there is no US economist of the stature of Prof Feldstein pushing the idea that tax cuts paid for themselves by the boost to economic activity. The case is made by rightwing ideologues rather than economists.

The same is increasingly true of the critique of Keynesian demand management. American New Keynesians have made a substantial dent in the idea that rational expectations mean the entire conception is impossible. Professors George Akerlof at MIT and Greg Mankiw of Harvard have developed the intriguing idea that it is rational for economic agents not to be completely rational. Most of us proceed not by exhaustively gathering every piece of information so that the market bounces back to normal as we realise our mistakes, they say, but by making rough guesses.

A restaurateur doesn't change his prices every day. And taxpayers don't think, when the government borrows money for a large road-building programme, that it will have to raise taxes some time in the future to pay off the debt so they had better save now to be ready for the extra taxation. It may be "rational", but nobody in the real world behaves like that.

BUT if individuals are rational in being nearly rational, then Friedman's and Lucas's proof that demand management is self-defeating fails. Economies, as Keynes said, can get locked into disequilibriums for long periods because individuals and firms are just unable to find the array of prices that allows the economy to return by itself to the path of rising output and full employment. Prices are not reliable enough in a nearly rational world to co-ordinate economic activity except in the very long run, and by then we are dead.

We need the government to act to break the impasse; and the economy does respond to deflationary and expansionary stimuli.

There is growing acceptance that the quality of human capital, public infrastructure and trust relations within firms are key determinants of growth. Economists arguing for capitalism and careless about inequality and income distribution are increasingly hard to find, even on the free-market right.

But, on the left, there are few who advocate old-fashioned government pump-priming and intervention. The new Keynesian ideas advocate government acting more subtly, building up human and physical capital, moderating inequality. While accepting that demand management remains a powerful tool, it is best used sparingly.

It is fashionable to argue that the right still has all the best tunes. Wrong. Its case is evaporating. A new range of ideas is emerging that will underpin a new politics. The only question is how long it will take to get there.

In Brief

THE Dutch government has thrown a 365 million guilder ($225 million) lifeline to ailing aircraft manufacturer Fokker, giving the Amsterdam-based company a breathing space in which to search for a rescuer. South Korea's Samsung Aerospace was the first to show publicly declared interest.

TWO men who used bogus connections to swindle the former cooker company Belling out of £2.3 million were jailed for nine and seven years in London. Charles Deacon, aged 54, and James Fuller, aged 57, duped Belling's management into raiding the firm's pension fund to pay an advance fee for a loan that never materialised.

AT&T's 1995 profits were virtually wiped out by losses at its computer division and the cost of structuring its operations prior to the planned break-up of the group in 1997. During 1995, net income fell from $4.7 billion to $139 million.

SHARES in Olivetti plunged almost 10 per cent after the Italian computer and office products company forecast a greater-than-expected 1995 loss.

THE Walt Disney company made a record $496 million profit for the first quarter, a 2.9 per cent increase over $482 million a year ago.

AMERICAN Express has complained to the European Commission about alleged abusive and anti-competitive behaviour by its arch rival, Visa. The latter is considering the introduction of a regulation which would ban its 19,000 member banks from issuing Amex cards.

UNISYS, the fifth-largest US computer group, has announced plans to dismiss 7,900 people at a cost of more than $717 million in redundancy payments and capacity cuts.

USAIR reversed a six-year run of losses when it reported a $119.3 million profit for 1995.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates January 29	Sterling rates January 22
Australia	2.0362-2.0404	2.0641-2.0684
Austria	15.72-15.74	15.69-15.72
Belgium	45.92-46.02	45.88-45.99
Canada	2.0802-2.0832	2.0693-2.0723
Denmark	8.65-8.67	8.63-8.65
France	7.69-7.70	7.63-7.64
Germany	2.2354-2.2385	2.2326-2.2357
Hong Kong	11.65-11.66	11.68-11.69
Ireland	0.9630-0.9656	0.9627-0.9653
Italy	2,409-2,413	2,402-2,406
Japan	160.92-161.19	159.78-160.05
Netherlands	2.5036-2.5069	2.4999-2.5032
New Zealand	2.2564-2.2589	2.2769-2.2802
Norway	9.79-9.81	9.77-9.79
Portugal	232.46-233.07	230.80-231.42
Spain	189.88-190.17	188.10-188.39
Sweden	10.51-10.53	10.82-10.85
Switzerland	1.8172-1.8200	1.7959-1.7987
USA	1.5068-1.5076	1.5120-1.5130
ECU	1.2255-1.2269	1.2124-1.2135

FTSE100 Share Index down 19.6 at 3734.8. FTSE 250 Index down 10.0 at 4069.1. Gold up [illegible] at [illegible].

Granada triumphs in struggle for Forte

Ian King

THE City's most gripping takeover battle this decade came to a climax last week when Forte, the 60-year-old family-run international hotels dynasty, succumbed to a £3.9 billion hostile bid from Granada, the television-to-motorway services group.

Forte, set up by Italian immigrant Charles Forte, later Lord Forte, from a Regent Street milk bar in 1935, surrendered after Granada claimed support from 67 per cent of Forte's shareholders.

The bid created a £155 million fees bonanza for the City's financial advisers in a return to 1980s-style takeovers, provoking criticism from the Labour party, which opposes the tax benefits offered to institutional shareholders in Granada.

Alistair Darling, Labour's City spokesman, said that Labour would seek to remove such tax breaks in the debate on the Finance Bill.

Victory was sealed for Granada when Mercury Asset Management, Forte's biggest single shareholder with a 14.4 per cent stake worth £562 million, pledged to support the bid when it closed on January 16.

The takeover means that some of Britain's top hotels, including the Waldorf and the Grosvenor House in central London, are likely to come under the hammer. Granada, known for its rental stores, motorway service stations and television shows, such as Coronation Street, has pledged to sell Forte's top-of-the-range hotels.

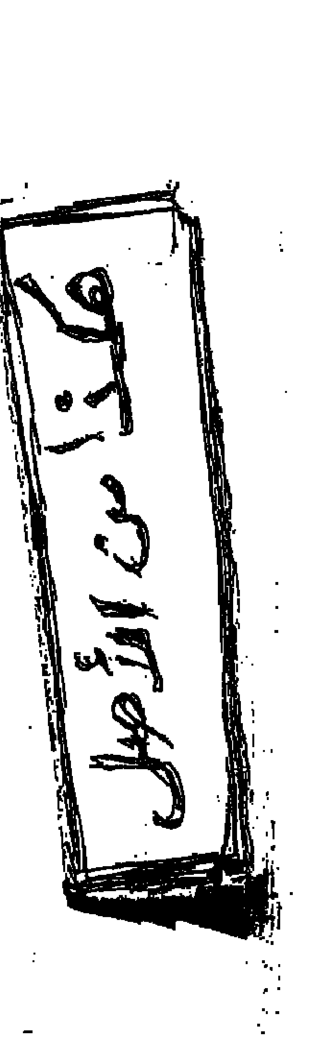
The day after Granada's victory, Sir Rocco Forte, the outgoing chief executive, announced plans to buy back the hotels. He is expected to offer £2 billion for the 155 hotels, but he is likely to have a fight on his hands as Granada has already received what it calls four "serious" approaches from other groups.

Sir Rocco meanwhile consoled himself with a £1.2 million profit on a sale of Forte shares.

The takeover by Granada will mean up to 1,000 job losses, including 335 at Forte's head office at London's Holborn. But Granada's triumphant chief executive, Gerry Robinson, insisted his company's victory was "good news for British jobs".

He said: "We are about creating jobs. The number of jobs we have created over the last few years is phenomenal."

Meanwhile, the brewing and leisure giant Whitbread, which had agreed to buy the Happy Eater, Little Chef and Welcome Break motorway services chain from Forte in the event of Granada's bid failing, may now seek to buy Welcome Break from Granada.



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The Washington Post

Drug Claims Threaten Colombian Leader

Douglas Farah in Bogota

PRESIDENT Ernesto Samper, facing new accusations that he not only received drug money from Cali cartel leaders but met with their emissary while president, last week allowed senior officials to begin overtures for a deal that could allow him to resign without facing criminal charges, according to knowledgeable sources.

The president suffered yet another blow when a senior general resigned. General Ricardo Cifuentes, in a brief statement, said he could no longer serve in a government that was "dishonest." Since the crisis exploded last month, when the former defense minister, Fernando Botero, charged that Samper knowingly took drug money, the president has gone out of his way to court the military. The armed forces, while not directly participating in politics here, remain very influential.

In a communique issued last week, Samper denied the new charges, calling them "libelous" and "vile."

Samper and his closest aides held a series of meetings throughout the following day. He has vowed not to resign, but reportedly allowed two of his senior officials to talk to some of the nation's leading opposition politicians who are demanding his resignation.

Ernesto Samper: Branded the accusations as 'vile'

Sources said Samper appeared to be becoming more flexible on what has emerged as one of the biggest points of contention surrounding his possible resignation — who would succeed him. The constitution calls for the vice president to assume office, and the great majority of the growing number of leading political figures calling for Samper's resignation favor that outcome. But Vice President Humberto de la Calle and Samper are political enemies and are not even on speaking terms, and Samper has said de la Calle could not succeed him.

In a television interview, Samper said that de la Calle's fate should be the same as the president's, because "we were elected in the same campaign, with the same money . . . Like marriage, it is a union that cannot be dissolved."

"The president's people said he was willing to work on that point," said a source familiar with the ongoing talks. "It is a time for negotiation, and he does not have any cards left. It is not a done deal, but at least talks have started."

But the source said Samper's envoys were adamant that any deal on a resignation must guarantee that he not face arrest or criminal charges.

The charge that the president met with an envoy of the cartel came from Santiago Medina, who was Samper's campaign treasurer and is under arrest for his admitted participation in receiving and delivering millions of dollars in drug money during the 1994 presidential campaign. In an interview with CNN's Spanish-language service, Medina also said several other senior members of Samper's campaign were involved in procuring dirty money.

Medina said that a woman sent by Cali cartel leaders met with Samper when the president stopped in Quito, Ecuador, on September 4, 1995. Medina said he had given the prosecutor general's office a copy of the hotel registry showing a woman named Maria Teresa Arias met with Samper at 7:35 a.m. and left 25 minutes later. Arias, in an interview with a local TV program, said she had met the president at the time and place stated, but denied any ties to the Cali cartel.

Medina also said he had turned over documents showing Samper was the president of a bank, Banco de los Trabajadores, in 1984, when the bank's chief shareholders were brothers Miguel and Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela, leaders of the Cali cartel. Samper has maintained he never met the brothers.

New $100 Bill Upsets Russians

Lee Hockstader in Moscow

AMERICAN media events tend not to get much notice in Russia. John Wayne Bobbitt was never a household name in Moscow. The Million Man March was greeted with a shrug. Even O.J. failed to register.

But when the U.S. Treasury Department said it would introduce a redesigned $100 bill, the announcement created a storm here. Millions of Russians suddenly got very nervous.

After all, if there's anywhere in the world where the dollar is still almighty, it's Russia. More than $100 million comes into the country each day, and there is something in the order of $20 billion in greenbacks in circulation, more than any country outside the United States itself. That comes to $400 for every family in Russia, probably as much or more than the value of Russian rubles in circulation.

And 80 percent of it is in $100 bills. Urban grandmothers save C-notes to safeguard their retirements. Slick New Russians in Moscow peel them from fat wads to pay for dinner, a sports car or a new dacha in the country. Mafia dons carry U.S. hundreds around in attache cases. And whoever can manage to be paid his salary in dollars, does.

Now, with the introduction of the new hundreds just weeks away, Russians have a serious case of the jitters. Conditioned by repeated ruble "reforms" over the years — the most recent in 1993, when people were told suddenly that their older notes had to be traded in immediately — Russians are afraid their $100 bills too will lose their value.

"People are all stirred up. They're calling like crazy," said Sergei Yegorov, president of the Association of Russian Banks. "Even today, a guy was in here asking me what to do with his savings, whether he should change his hundreds for twenties and fifties . . . There are grounds for this worry, because Russians have been deceived by their own government so many times."

To calm Russian dollar-holders, the U.S. government has launched a massive publicity campaign here in advance of the introduction of the new, harder-to-counterfeit $100 note. In Moscow and St. Petersburg, focus groups have been organized to fine-tune a TV, radio and print advertising blitz. Some 100,000 leaflets and 1.2 million posters are being distributed in Russian. Hot lines with Russian-speaking operators are on duty to answer Russians' questions about the new hundreds and soothe their anxieties.

The message: The U.S. government has never recalled or devalued dollars since they were first issued in 1861, and it won't now. No need to rush to trade in your savings. Old hundreds will still be good everywhere.

U.S. Trains Troops With Links to Iran

America is committed to aid Bosnia's army despite its Islamist ties, writes **John Pomfret** in Zenica

THE OFFICE of Brigadier General Dzemal Merdan is an ornate affair, equipped with an elaborately carved wooden gazebo ringed with red velvet couches and slippers for his guests. A sheepskin prayer mat lies in the corner, pointing toward Mecca.

The most striking thing in the chamber is a large flag. It is not the flag of Bosnia, but of Iran.

Pinned with a button of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran's late Islamic leader, the flag occupies pride of place in Merdan's digs. Next to it hangs another pennant, that of the Democratic Action Party, the increasingly nationalist Islamic organization of President Alija Izetbegovic that dominates Bosnia's Muslim region.

The flags in Merdan's office underscore a problem for the United States as it prepares a program to equip and train Bosnia's army. While it claims to be apolitical and secular, Bosnia's mostly Muslim army of 110,000 men has increasingly turned to Islam and Iran during its 3½-year war against the Serbs. Following the communist traditions that made the army a tool of the party, it has also come to be dominated by Izetbegovic's political organization.

Merdan's position highlights the American dilemma. As head of the office of training and development of the Bosnian army, he is a key liaison figure in the U.S. program. It is through Merdan's office, for example, that the first of a series of U.S.-backed measures to train and equip Bosnian fighters is being carried out. Six soldiers, picked by him, are applying to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs for acceptance in the fall.

"This is a good beginning," he said the other day, leaning against one of the sumptuous sofas as three of the six applicants fidgeted nearby. "We are expecting a lot more."

But Merdan, Western sources say, also has another job — as liaison with foreign Islamic fighters here since 1992 and promoter of the Islamic faith among Bosnia's recruits. Sources identified Merdan as being instrumental in the creation of a brigade of Bosnian soldiers, the 7th Muslim Brigade, that is heavily influenced by Islam and trained by fighters from Iran's Revolutionary Guards. He has also launched a program, these sources say, to build mosques on military training grounds to teach Islam to Bosnian recruits. In addition, he helped establish training camps in Bosnia where Revolutionary Guards carried out their work.

Under the Dayton agreement, Iranian and other foreign "freedom fighters" were supposed to be out of Bosnia by last month. While most of the estimated 1,000 men have left, dozens have stayed. NATO officers view them as a threat, estimating those still here at several hundred, including 150 to 200 Iranian Revolutionary Guards. U.S. troops in northeastern Bosnia were put on alert last week, and pressure is mounting on Izetbegovic's government to crack down on those remaining.

Merdan's two hats — like his two flags — trouble some Western officials, who worry about giving aid to an army without openly demanding that it first change its ways. "It's a dangerous road the Americans are going down," a West European diplomat said. "It's throwing gas on a fire."

The U.S. program to assist the Bosnian army was a response to pressure from the Republican-controlled Senate. In endorsing the dispatch of U.S. troops to Bosnia last month as part of the NATO-led force of 60,000 soldiers, the Senate demanded that the Clinton administration lead an international effort to help the government army match its enemies, the formidably armed Bosnian Serbs.

Late last year, the Pentagon took the first concrete steps in the program by paying the Institute for Defense Analyses close to $400,000 to assess the military capabilities of the Bosnian government forces. The study, which remains classified, concluded that the Bosnian army's leaders are competent, a contention that drew shrieks of derision from Western officers here, but that its troops lack a wide array of equipment and training.

Bosnia's mostly Muslim army has increasingly turned to Islam and Iran

In late December, the Clinton administration appointed a senior Pentagon official, James Pardew, to coordinate the effort and established a task force in the State Department. It also opened talks with Turkey, which occupied parts of the former Yugoslavia for 500 years, about providing training facilities.

Turkey announced an agreement last week under which its forces will train Bosnian troops. The protocol was signed in Sarajevo by Gen. Ersim Yaltsin of the Turkish army and Gen. Rasim Delic, the Bosnian army commander.

Current estimates place the cost of training at less than $100 million and military equipment at $300 million more. To supplement the Turks, a U.S. official said the Clinton administration will offer about $220,000 for international military exchanges to the United States this year. The U.S. government has also recommended that the Bosnian army use retired American military officers in addition to the Turks.

Ejup Ganic, Bosnia's vice president, acknowledged that one of the conditions the United States is imposing is that Iran, which supplied weapons to Bosnia during the war in violation of the U.N. arms embargo on the region, can have no military role in Bosnia.

"We said, 'Fine, no Iranians,'" he said. "And the Iranians were also smart. They are leaving without any problems."

Even if the Iranians go, the American-led program faces other difficulties because it actually will be training not one army but two.

Ever since March 1994, when the United States ended a year-long war between Bosnia's Muslims and Croats, the Clinton administration has tried to merge the Bosnian army with the Croat militia it had battled. So far the creation of this force, called the Army of the Federation, has proved impossible.

But U.S. pressure on the two sides during the November peace talks in Dayton, Ohio, compelled them to come to some type of deal. Croats and Muslims agreed to create a unified Defense Ministry and a unified command with two commanders, one Croat and one Muslim. But they also decided that the Croat militia and the Bosnian army will remain separate in units from the corps and division level down.

A U.S. official said the Clinton administration will focus some of its training efforts on building up the combined Defense Ministry and to encourage the two sides to engage in "real joint planning."

"We know this is a trouble spot," he said. "We will be working not just with the Muslims, but with the federation army as well."

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Refugees Dream of Home

Exiles driven out by Indonesia's invasion hope to return someday, writes **Keith B. Richburg** in Macao

ONE CAME to escape a second prison term. Another came because his name was on a list of dissidents. And Levi, with the scar on his side, came because he almost died in the graveyard where he collapsed amid the dead.

They are refugees from East Timor, the former Portuguese colony in Southeast Asia invaded and annexed 20 years ago by Indonesia.

Almost all were involved in some way in the struggle against what they see as the illegal occupation of their homeland. Some are university students. One describes himself as a member of the armed underground resistance and said he carried medicine and supplies to guerrillas in the hills.

They have come 3,700 kilometers to this tiny island near Hong Kong by following a well-traveled "underground railroad" that runs from East Timor to Bali or Jakarta, in Indonesia, and across the South China Sea.

They come on fake passports, usually bribing Indonesian officials along the way. And once here, on what is Chinese territory but is still administered by Portugal, they are given money, a place to live, a passport and a chance to start a new life.

And all of them talk about the chance to return home someday.

"I hope," said a 32-year-old man who fled here in 1991, after a massacre by Indonesian army troops. Like most of the others, he asked that his name not be used, for fear that relatives left behind might be harmed. "I never dreamed I'd leave my country," he said. If he stayed, "every day I'd be persecuted by the military. But what does life mean for me here? Everybody wants to live in his own country."

In the years since Indonesia incorporated East Timor as its 27th province, a largely invisible, low-level resistance has persisted there, creating for President Suharto's government an embarrassing international issue that will not go away.

The efforts of armed guerrillas are regarded in Jakarta as more an annoyance than a direct threat. But with each army crackdown, the government is subjected to fresh charges from foreign countries and interest groups that it is violating human rights.

The East Timorese refugees who make it to Macao arrive with tales of repression and resistance. Their presence here is in many ways a testament to the fact that after 20 years, Indonesia still has not succeeded in consolidating its hold over the East Timorese and dampening their demands for self-determination.

There are about 200 Timorese now in Macao, according to the Reverend Francisco Maria Fernandes, a Catholic priest who left East Timor shortly after Indonesia's invasion. Six years ago he came to Macao, where he assists new refugees from the largely Catholic province that is now part of a Muslim nation.

About 100 of the Timorese are asylum-seekers waiting for visas before settling in a new home. Many of the rest are mixed-blood Chinese Timorese, and most have already been integrated into Macao society.

"There is no problem," Father Fernandes said. "They are accepted here. Macao is the only territory under Portuguese administration close to Timor."

The United Nations still recognizes Portugal as the administering power of East Timor, and anyone born there is considered a Portuguese citizen and can apply for a Portuguese passport. But because most of the refugees sneak out on fake passports, they must wait in Macao while a local support group helps them compile the needed documents — birth certificates, baptismal records, anything — to prove their identity.

Manuel Tilman, an East Timorese lawyer assisting the refugee with their resettlement, said one or two asylum-seekers arrived each week. But the number varies. Last year, some 500 came through, he said.

Many of those here now are young people who were active in the underground resistance in East Timor.

"We never give up, we never accept being part of Indonesia," said Jaime Ximenes, a soft-spoken East Timorese who left his homeland at the age of 14, just after the Indonesian invasion. He is a member of Fretilin, East Timor's underground resistance movement.

From his new home in Macao, Mr Ximenes said he was part of a "new generation" of East Timorese, a younger, better-educated generation that shuns talk of open conflict and wants, instead, to take a conciliatory approach — even if that means deferring the dream of independence.

"What we want is for Indonesia to accept East Timor as a different entity," Mr Ximenes said. "We want recognition that we are different from Indonesia. A solution for East Timor can be a compromise."

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Winter Hits Moscow Homeless

Lee Hockstader in Moscow

EVERY so often, especially when the mid-winter cold turns bitter and scores of people start dropping dead on the streets, officials at Moscow City Hall announce that homelessness has become a big problem and say the time has come to tackle it.

Yet nothing happens. The thousands of homeless men, women and children who live on the city's streets continue to suffer harassment and even beatings by police, and they receive help not from the city government but from Western-run humanitarian organizations.

Various agencies, none of which is really in charge of the homeless but all of which must deal with them occasionally, give widely varying estimates of the number of homeless in Moscow — from 30,000 to as many as 300,000. To serve this population, the government operates one 24-bed shelter.

With such limited assistance available to the homeless, and with temperatures recently hovering just above zero, death tolls have begun to climb. One day in December, three people died of exposure in Moscow and 19 were hospitalized. Since the beginning of November, about 300 people have died of the cold on the streets of Moscow, officials say; several dozen were homeless.

"The accessibility to services is the main problem," said Siobhan Keegan, 29, an Irish nurse who is medical director in Moscow for the international group Doctors Without Borders. "In Europe or America, the homeless have a certain access to health care. But in Moscow it's very, very poor for the homeless."

As she spoke, about 15 homeless men shuffled and shivered and stamped on the snow outside the medical clinic run by Doctors Without Borders, in an out-of-the-way industrial neighborhood of Moscow. The cramped little clinic has no real waiting room, so patients must wait outside in the cold.

One man hobbled away from the clinic on a pair of splintering sticks that passed for crutches. Another man, his hair matted, his skin splotchy from cold and his eyes watery, said he'd lost his apartment in the city of Vladimir after he spent three years in prison for stealing a car windshield. "I lost my papers, and with no documents you can't get an apartment," said the man.

A third man, Anton Solavyov, 30, said he made his living sweeping snow from church yards and doing odd jobs in the street markets in return for scraps of food and pocket money. He'd also lost his apartment when he was in prison as a teenager. "This is my 11th year being homeless," he said. "Every two months I go to the police detention center, where they'll keep you for 10 days and give you some identification papers and let you sleep in a warm bed in a cell.

"But without a permit to live in the city, you're like a leashed dog. You can't do anything. And on the street you'd better avoid the cops because if they grab you, they'll tear up your documents. Then you're nothing, you're nobody."

None of them had heard of the latest pronouncement from the city — that it plans to build an additional 10 shelters, one in each of Moscow's precincts. Officials say they also are determined to settle the question of residency permits for the homeless, without which they are ineligible for city services and jobs.

But there have been similar, specific promises before. City Hall pledged to open additional shelters in 1994. That never happened. Instead, the city expelled the Doctors Without Borders clinics from two train stations and offered them the cramped space where the clinic is operating today.

"These [promises] are pretty words, nothing else," said Solavyov. "Maybe in 10 years they'll do something."

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the criminal code banned beggars and vagrants. In effect, homelessness was illegal. Anyone unlucky enough to lose his place of residence could be arrested, expelled from the city or sent to prison. The result: Moscow had no homeless people, at least not officially.

With the collapse, the code was changed and the veil that covered up ugly social problems was lifted. Very quickly, thousands of homeless people started trickling into the city, in alleys, parks and train stations and lining up at soup kitchens operated by the Salvation Army.

By 1993, it was generally believed that there were at least 30,000 homeless in the capital. Some estimates ran much higher. And in the last years, as the chasm between wealth and poverty has widened in Russia, and particularly in Moscow, there is anecdotal evidence that the number of homeless has soared.

There is precious little sympathy for Moscow's homeless. In the past, President Boris Yeltsin and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov ordered the homeless to be picked up and removed from the city, especially during civic festivals or when foreign dignitaries were in town.



OFFSHORE FUND PERFORMANCE TO 1ST JANUARY 1996

	SINCE LAUNCH % CHANGE	SINCE LAUNCH POSITION IN SECTOR	5 YEARS % CHANGE	FUND RESEARCH RATINGS
International Growth	+525.9	2 out of 21	+85.6	AAA
Emerging Companies	+627.4	1 out of 34	+165.0	AAA
American Growth	+959.0	1 out of 15	+191.2	AAA
Far Eastern Growth	+402.3	1 out of 19	+140.1	AAA
Japanese Growth	+38.3	8 out of 86	–	AAA
European Growth	+162.8	3 out of 8	+73.9	–
UK Growth	+275.6	1 out of 30	+136.8	AAA
Asian Smaller Markets	+72.4	12 out of 90	–	AAA
Latin American Growth	+6.3	5 out of 30	–	–
Global Bond	+17.0	114 out of 125	–	–

Tales of a Lifetime

Bruce Bawer

THE COLLECTED STORIES OF EVAN S. CONNELL
By Evan S. Connell
Counterpoint. 675pp. $30

IF AT ONE END of the literary spectrum may be found authors like Anita Brookner, whose books tend to resemble one another in virtually every important aspect from mise-en-scene to page count, at the other extreme are those intrepid, maddening souls who, never attempting the same thing twice, singlemindedly pursue their idiosyncratic visions down paths that sometimes lead to gold mines, sometimes to dead ends, and occasionally to the literary equivalent of one of those cliffs that Wile E. Coyote finds himself speeding off of in Warner Brothers cartoons.

Such a writer is Evan S. Connell, who has been confounding critical expectations and challenging readers' tastes for decades. Who could predict that the creator of the masterly novels Mrs. Bridge (1959) and Mr. Bridge (1969) would also produce two quirkily visionary free-verse aggregations of myth and maxim entitled Notes From A Bottle Found On The Beach At Carmel (1963) and Points For A Compass Rose (1974)? Who would have imagined that the author of an American Psycho precursor entitled Diary Of A Rapist (1966) would go on to publish Son Of The Morning Star (1984), an eccentric portrait of George Armstrong Custer, and The Alchymist's Journal (1991), a dense, cryptic rant by Paracelsus, the 16th-century physician and mystic?

It will surprise no longtime reader of Connell's longer works to learn that his Collected Stories, composed over a period of 50 years and set in a variety of places from Sausalito to Pensacola to Paris, is a grab bag of writings many of which would be categorized by narrow constructionists not as short stories but as episodes, vignettes, character studies, monologues or dialogues. Like Connell's novels, they reflect not only an irreverence toward conventional notions of literary form but an inquisitiveness about the world's history, an awe at its mystery, an ironic stance toward political reactionaries, and a pre-occupation with the mid-20th-century middle American middle class (which Connell incisively, if empathically, satirized in the Bridge novels). In one story after another, Connell contrasts the humdrum householder with the world traveler, the captive with the free, timid attachment to the status quo with belief in social change. Birds recur as images of freedom — and as the victims of human beings with shackled souls: In one story, a gang of boys tortures a bird; in another, a small-town Kansas businessman chains a condor to a tree.

At his weakest, Connell labors insufficiently to develop characters or to establish a sense of place, and targets bourgeois life with cheap shots and easy ironies that somehow manage to recall both Sinclair Lewis and Allen Ginsberg. Too many of Connell's stories exist chiefly to proffer tendentious speeches either by authorial mouthpieces or by Rotary Club types whom Connell wants us to find absurd. "The Giant," for example, consists mostly of a Connellian sermon about the universe's immensity; "Mrs. Proctor Bemis" is essentially a blinkered tirade by a conservative housewife; and several narratives about a pair of buddies named Leon and Bebert invite us to scoff at their cliched political views.

Yet at his best Connell depicts middle-class America with dispassion and clarity, attending not only to Joe and Betty Sixpack's philistinism but also to the vanity of bohemians and the snobbery of artsy sophisticates. Consider the book's finest story, "Arcturus" (1954), which richly anatomizes the largely unarticulated emotions raging beneath the civil surface of an evening social event in a middle-class home. Muhlbach, a New York insurance salesman, and his dying wife, Joyce, have invited for dinner her old flame, Sandy Kirk, now a globe-trotting diplomat. Kirk shows up late, accompanied by Dee Borowski, a ballerina who, "if one should quietly ask her name . . . might reply without thinking that it is Deborah Burns." It is at once clear that there is no love lost between the lofty, insouciant Kirk and the stolid, earthbound Muhlbach.



ILLUSTRATION: JILL KARLA SCHWARZ

YET THE tension between these men forms only part of the rich human tapestry of this story, which abounds in affecting, and thoroughly credible, small epiphanies — among them Kirk's realization that he still loves Joyce (or, as Connell puts it, that "she has had the freedom of his heart as now it seems he has had hers"), Joyce's recognition that she loves both men, "her husband because he needs her love, and Kirk because he does not," and the sudden discovery by Muhlbach's little boy, Otto, of his desire to tickle his baby sister's ribs or feet. (Notes the author: "He does not know this is love.")

Bringing to mind both Joyce's "The Dead" and Conrad Aiken's "Silent Snow, Secret Snow," "Arcturus" (which is this collection's opening story) quietly and deliberately captures something of the uneasiness of people in their frail bodies, in the great world where they find themselves, and in the company of fellow human beings to whom they are tied by feelings that are as powerful as they are enigmatic. When Muhlbach's father mixes up archaeology and astronomy, Connell plainly means to underline the point that earth and sky are both mysteries, and that the existences of those, like Muhlbach, who cling, as it were, to the earth are as full of mystery and meaning as the lives of those, like Kirk, who hitch their wagons to stars.

In a story entitled "The Mountains of Guatemala," Muhlbach (who also appears in other Connell stories) declares that most authors today "do not know how to write of the world and its magic, but merely of themselves." If Connell's stories establish that he has spent half a century striving, often in unorthodox ways, to write evocatively of the world and its magic, it must be said that the most successful item here, "Arcturus," also happens to be the one that most neatly reflects conventional notions of what a short story is. As much as one admires Connell's abiding artistic courage and adventurousness, one cannot help wishing he had written a few more like it.

Paperbacks

The Essential Black Literature Guide, edited by Roger M. Valade III (Visible Ink Press, $17.95)

PUBLISHED in association with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, this guide contains brief biographies of more than 200 black writers, as well as summaries of almost as many works, from the poems of Phillis Wheatley to the screenplays of Spike Lee. The Essential Black Literature Guide also includes definitions of literary terms, as well as terms, like blues, that are of particular importance to black culture. Copiously illustrated, the guide also includes a time-line that allows readers to put literary works in historical perspective.

Early Negro Writing, 1760-1837, edited by Dorothy Porter (Black Classic Press, $24.95; hardcover, $45.95)

WHEN Jupiter Hammon's "An Evening Thought, Salvation By Christ, With Penitential Cries," was published (it was the first poem by a black author to be published in 1760 as a separate work). Included are narratives, essays, poems, letters and speeches by Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Benjamin Banneker and many others. Selected by Dorothy Porter, retired curator of Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Early Negro Writing also includes the minutes and constitutions of early self groups.

The Complete James Bond Movie Encyclopedia, by Steven Jay Rubin (Contemporary Books, $25); The Incredible World of 007, by Lee Pfeiffer and Philip Lisa (Citadel Press, $19.95)

EXTRAORDINARILY sexy and compliant women, arch-criminals so suave and powerful they make Prof. Moriarty seem like a small-town punk, weaponry straight out of Thrilling Wonder Stories, and always, with the clock ticking toward zero hour, a worldwide conspiracy or global threat that can be forestalled by only one man: Bond, James Bond, a hero unshaken before any threat, stirred by every pretty face. The Bond books, by Ian Fleming, delivered excitement, but the 17 glossy movies created a sleek fantasy world of danger, sophisticated invincibility and gallows humor. These two albums, both updated to include brief accounts of the new Bond film, GoldenEye, chronicle the various films' minor characters, actors, scenes, stunts, gadgets, locales and, not least, delicious vamps.

Lytton Strachey: The New Biography, by Michael Holroyd (Farrar Straus Giroux, $17); The Art of Dora Carrington, by Jane Hill (Thames and Hudson, $15.95)

MOVIES made from books frequently turn spectators into readers: For admirers of the film Carrington, the obvious place to learn more about Lytton Strachey and Dora Carrington are these two books: The first provides an elegantly written, sexually explicit account of the life of this prominent member of the Bloomsbury set; the second is the catalogue of an exhibition of Carrington's paintings, many associated with Bloomsbury.

The U.S. Scientist Who Armed China

Daniel Southerland

THREAD OF THE SILKWORM
By Iris Chang
Basic Books. 329pp. $27.50

IN JUNE, 1950, the FBI accused a brilliant Chinese scientist in California who had helped pioneer the American space age of being a Communist Party member. Despite a lack of evidence against him, Tsien Hsue-shen was held under virtual house arrest for five years and then deported to China, a victim of the McCarthy era. The United States lost a scientific genius; China gained one.

Tsien, who had once sought U.S. citizenship, quickly became one of the most powerful scientists in China, guiding the development of China's nuclear missile, satellite and space programs. In the 1960s, it was Tsien Hsue-shen, who proposed construction of the infamous Haiying missile — commonly known as the Silkworm — that menaced American ships during the Gulf War.

Iris Chang writes compellingly of Tsien's fascinating life in Thread Of The Silkworm, and grapples with many of the contradictions that beset this disciplined yet impulsive, sensitive yet arrogant man. She begins with his birth into a wealthy Chinese silk merchant's family early in this century. Along the way, she provides a history of China's nuclear missile program as well as a description of the political climate in the 1950s and '60s that shaped the thinking of some of today's top Chinese scientists and military leaders.

During his first year back in China, Tsien worked under incredibly primitive conditions as director of a fledgling institute devoted to aerodynamics for defense purposes. According to Chang, "there was only one telephone in the entire building, which rang incessantly for Tsien. His office was on the fourth floor and the phone was on the ground floor and he had to run up and down those stairs to answer the phone. There was also little usable equipment. The institute purchased some desk calculators that had to be wound up by hand . . ."

Although Chang has dispelled many of the mysteries surrounding Tsien Hsue-shen, he emerges from this book as an enigmatic figure.

"How stark the contrast between the young Tsien and the old," Chang writes. "The young Tsien dreamed of a world of peace and equality. The older Tsien lived in a world governed by regimented hierarchy and helped manufacture the weapons of world destruction. The young Tsien was both Chinese and American, at heart a citizen of two countries. The older Tsien felt alienated by both."

Chang finds evidence that Tsien denounced a former friend and colleague in order to protect himself during one of Mao Zedong's periodic crackdowns on intellectuals, made statements through the years to suit the prevailing Maoist political dogma, and then gradually became an unquestioning bureaucrat.

After the Chinese army attack on protesters at Tiananmen Square in 1989, Tsien denounced the demonstrators as "evil elements" and, in line with prevailing orthodoxy, branded the dissident astrophysicist Fang Lizhi "the scum of the nation."

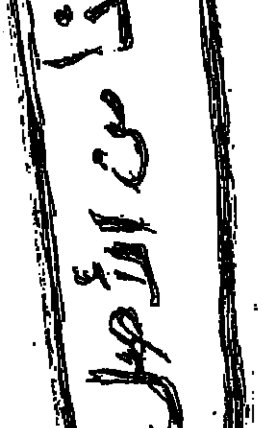
But Tsien's personal life remains a mystery, according to Chang. Only a handful of friends see him in the privacy of his home in Beijing and then only rarely.

Not surprisingly, Chang was unable to interview Tsien. But she did succeed in reaching relatives, friends, colleagues, students and employees of the scientist who were eager to talk about him. She also found a wealth of documents in U.S. government and university archives, a large U.S. Army file and portions of his FBI file tucked away in a U.S. Customs Service file.

She concludes that we will never know Tsien's true feelings toward the United States: "Publicly, Tsien has denounced the country that deported him for its capitalist system, but privately, quietly, unknown to most people in China, Tsien has permitted both his children . . . to return to the United States for further education — a sign that he may be far less hostile toward the United States than he makes out to be."

But Tsien's son, Yucon, an American citizen by birth, told Chang that only one thing could possibly bring his father to revisit the United States: an apology from the U.S. government to atone for treating Tsien like a criminal.

When she began her research on Tsien Hsue-shen several years ago, Chang could not have foreseen the current tensions in China's relations with the United States. Her book reminds us that while we now know a great deal about China's military hardware, we still need to know much more about the thinking of its military leaders and defense industry scientists.



Israel allows PLO leaders to return

Patrice Claude in Jerusalem

LESS than two hours after voting ended in the Palestinian elections on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, announced he had decided to allow the 430 exiled members of the Palestine National Council (PNC) to return to the self-governed territories controlled by Yasser Arafat.

This gesture in favour of the Palestinian diaspora had the effect of a bombshell. It was described as "abominable" by the rightwing Israeli opposition and "overwhelming" by the internal Palestinian political community.

It means that members of the PNC — the PLO's "parliament-in-exile" and highest political body, which represents Palestinian civilian society, the trade unions, the army of liberation and all the factions within the PLO, including those opposed to the agreements so far concluded with Israel — will be able, for the first time since its foundation in East Jerusalem 32 years ago, to return to self-governed Palestinian territories before April 20.

Does Peres's decision also mean that Israel recognises the unity of the whole Palestinian people? Does it signal that the Israelis are coming round to the idea that the 3 million people who make up the Palestinian diaspora all have a right to return?

Haggai Merom, president of the powerful foreign affairs and defence committee in the Knesset, says that he is against the return of Palestinians to Israeli soil, but that there is room for discussion over their return to the self-governed territories.

In the meantime, one thing is certain: when Peres took that spectacular decision — which in the weeks running up to the elections had the secret approval of ministers closest to the prime minister, including those responsible for national security — he showed himself to be both a visionary and a master tactician.

It took a visionary to realise that the legitimacy and credibility of his "partner in peace", Yasser Arafat, which has now been confirmed within the territories by a million voters, could only gather momentum if members of a diaspora that is in combative mood and feels frustrated at having been left out of the agreements become involved.

Peres was a master tactician because the historic decision would not only cut the ground from underneath the rightwing opposition but prepare his Labour party for victory at Israel's forthcoming general election.

When Labour's central committee last week appointed Peres as its sole candidate for the job of prime minister at the next general election, he refrained from making an announcement about the date of that poll. But all the signs are that instead of going to the country at the end of October, he will call an early election at the end of May or beginning of June.

According to well-informed sources, opinion polls discreetly commissioned by Peres over the past few weeks all say the same thing: the rightwing nationalist Likud party has yet to repair its badly dented image — Israelis hold it partly responsible for the climate of hatred that cost Yitzhak Rabin his life on November 4 — and has not the slightest chance, as things stand, of overthrowing the Labour-led coalition now in power.

The leader of the right, Benjamin Netanyahu, who in October was almost as popular as Rabin, now has a favourable opinion rating of only 25-30 per cent, as compared with almost 60 per cent for Peres.

Not only will the Israelis be electing the 120 members of the Knesset, but, after a 1994 change in the law, they will choose their prime minister by universal suffrage for the first time.

Much has been gained from the Israeli-Palestinian accords of Oslo and Taba: an official Fatah-approved end to the Palestinian intifada last week, a marked drop in the number of attacks on Israelis in 1995, a sharp decrease in hostile action by soldiers and Israeli settlers in the still occupied territories, and a distinct improvement in the country's international image. As a result, most Israelis support the peace accords, even though they are still rejected by the various rightwing parties.

The generally democratic nature of the Palestinian elections is bound to strengthen Israeli confidence, but only on one condition: that Arafat honours his September 1993 pledge to strike out within the next two months the clauses in the PLO Charter which call for the destruction of Israel (the first Palestinian "parliamentary" session will be held by February 21 at the latest).

The Charter was adopted in 1964 when the PLO came into being, amended in July 1968, and decreed by Arafat to be inoperative as long ago as 1989. It is now totally irrelevant both in its content and language.

Peres and his government realise this, but leading rightwingers have always claimed that the non-abrogation of the clauses proved that Arafat was a two-faced terrorist whose ultimate aim was still the destruction of Israel.

The prime minister's aim in allowing the return to Palestine of all members of the PNC, the only body empowered to amend the charter, is to put an end to that claim. Peres said last week that he could not demand the abrogation of the charter and at the same time prevent members of the body empowered to do that from meeting in the self-governed territories.

The thing Israelis find hardest to swallow is the idea that a group of men who, despite their advancing age, are still labelled "terrorists", such as Abu Abbas and George Habash, the Damascus-based leaders of the PLO's so-called "refusal" factions, should be allowed to return to Palestine, only a stone's throw from Israel.

Peres has said there will be no restrictions on their return. Nor will he require them to recognise Israel or the Oslo agreement. They will be allowed to come and decide for themselves. He said he thought it was high time they adopted a more mature and serious stance.

But Habash has said he will return to Palestine only after the creation of a Palestinian state and when all his fellow Palestinians in the diaspora have been allowed to do the same. Hard bargaining between the various PLO factions is already under way.

(January 23)

Palestinian exiles cast their eyes on home

Françoise Chipaux in Amman

WHETHER they live in muddy refugee camps or posh flats in the Jordanian capital, Amman, Palestinian exiles in their teens and twenties are obsessed by one idea: going home. Some are the children of activists who, like their PLO leaders, have spent years on an odyssey that took them from Lebanon to Yemen, the Gulf states and Tunisia; others have mouldered in refugee camps in Jordan, Syria or Lebanon.

But they are all to some degree critical of the policies pursued by their parents' generation. And, curiously, they somehow dread the unknown for which they so yearn. They all want peace, but few of them can imagine living alongside Israelis, whom they see as usurpers and therefore enemies.

The very few Jordan-based Palestinians who have gone on a trip "home" usually come back disappointed. What they find does not live up to the rose-tinted memories lovingly kept alive by their parents and grandparents. "Compared with Israel there's nothing in the territories," says Majed. "The streets aren't paved, the houses are old and ugly and everything's dirty".

They are shocked by the difference between their own cosmopolitan attitudes and the mindset of a largely rural society. "They're more religious than us, family traditions are stronger and social rules stricter," says Khaled.

"What with the intifada and the schools being closed, young people are badly educated. We don't have much in common," says Majed.

Something else shocked Luma: "Our parents always told us we'd get our houses back, but now I know it's not true — near my village there's a kibbutz with brick houses and gardens. You don't go to those lengths if you think you're going to get up and leave."

Young Palestinians in exile have mixed feelings about those who took part in the intifada. "Maybe they're more Palestinian than I am, and were braver and did more to get their land," says Khaled. It is not a view entirely shared by Amin: "They have more experience than us, but that doesn't entitle them to more, because everyone has helped to fight for Palestine in their own way."

Whether young Palestinians agree with the Oslo accords or not, they all say they were delighted when the Israeli army pulled out. "It's a beginning that will lead to the reconquest of the whole of Palestine," says Majed. He says he found it difficult to thank the Israeli family now living in "his" house (in fact his grandparents') for allowing him to visit it.

Most young Palestinians feel that peace will come only if all exiles are allowed to return and live normally in "their" country. Khaled, who supports Yasser Arafat ("There's no one else who can run the country"), says: "In 20, 30 or 40 years' time there won't be an Israel any more. If the Israelis want to live in peace, they'll have to open up their borders and let people back in. Then the two states will have to be united, as you can't have two governments in the same land. The Israelis will have to live with us, like the whites in South Africa. We suffered the same injustices as the blacks, but we'll eventually get our land back because we own it."

Many of the Palestinians whose parents have been refugees since 1948 see a "return" solely in terms of going back to villages which are now in Israeli hands. This feeling is particularly strong among inhabitants of the refugee camps.

Hussein, who like his father was born in Jordan, refuses to regard himself as a Jordanian. He knows his grandfather's house by heart — the three steps up to the front door, the little corridor leading to the sitting room, the fountain outside and the olive trees in the garden. No one has yet dared tell him that his village near Lod no longer exists.

The sense of belonging to a given village is particularly strong in the camps because up to now their inmates have been grouped together according to their place of origin. But Khaled is not interested in returning to his village: "After my studies I'll go back to Palestine to rebuild the country, but probably to Ramallah or Jerusalem — they're cities and it'll be easier to adjust."

Although all young Palestinians felt frustrated at not being able to vote in the elections, they see them as a first step towards the construction of the Palestinian state that will offer them a recognised and protected identity.

"The elections will give us a state, a government, and a president, and the message to all Palestinians abroad will be: come home," says Ahmad. "At the moment we're talking about the Palestine of 1967, but later it'll be the turn of the Palestine of 1948." And what about the Israelis? "They'll go back to Europe, America, or wherever they came from."

"During the elections we only heard home-grown Palestinians talking," says Firas. "The main thing is that a government should emerge which will answer the needs of people like us, who live abroad and who nobody listens to."

"I'd have voted for the people who have suffered for our country, but they decided not to stand," says Amin, who has only one hero: Sheikh Yassin, the head of the Islamic Hamas movement jailed in Israel. And what about Arafat? "No true hero can agree to make peace with the enemy," he says. "We fight the Zionists and he makes peace with them."

Like all Palestinians, these young people hope that their times of unhappiness will soon be over. Brought up to remember their lost country, they first want to get it back, and only then maybe think about peace and possibly living alongside the Israelis.

"Peace is good," says Khaled, "but the agreement we signed is not as good as all that: The Palestinians don't have the same rights as the Israelis. We're for peace but not for a normalisation, because the Israelis don't deserve it. They're doing nothing to encourage normal relations.

"There are still people in prison. Some of our fighters can't return home because the Israelis say they have blood on their hands. But then so do the Israelis. The rules of the game should be the same for everyone."

And Amin asks: "Why are Israeli tourists allowed to come to Jordan as they please whereas we're not allowed to visit our own country?"

(January 20)

Vietnam fears the US will win the peace

Jean-Claude Pomonti in Hanoi

THE Vietnamese president, Le Duc Anh, when visiting central Vietnam recently, called on local Communist Party cadres to "reinforce state management of all aspects of the socio-economic situation".

A few days earlier, the party's general secretary, Do Muoi, had said: "As Lenin taught us, we are not afraid of capitalist companies; but we are afraid of not being able to supervise or control them." In saying that, he mainly had in mind joint ventures with foreign companies.

The Vietnamese have recently been subjected to a spate of official exhortations to fight "the negative effects" of the opening up of the country and the social vices that foreign influences have brought in.

The newspaper Quan Doi Nhan Dan, organ of the People's Army, even went so far as to accuse "American strategists" of launching an "invisible wave of attacks" on economic, cultural and diplomatic fronts, because they "dream" that the introduction of a market economy in Vietnam will encourage "a new political regime" to emerge.

There are several reasons for the resurgence of such rhetoric. Last year, when Vietnam was recognised by Washington and joined the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean), it entered a world totally different from the one it had known when it enjoyed a close relationship with the then Soviet Union.

The shock to the system has been worse than expected. The speed at which changes have been taking place has only exacerbated the traditional debate about the degree of freedom that the government and the national assembly can be allowed without calling into question the dominant role played by the Communist Party. Another element fuelling the debate is the prospect of the party's eighth Congress, which is due to be held in Hanoi in June.

Towards the end of last year Dao Duy Tung went to Beijing. He is the fourth-ranking member of the Politburo and probable successor to Do Muoi should the latter, now aged 78, decide to retire from politics.



The opening of diplomatic ties between Hanoi and Washington has boosted US investment in Vietnam, but the Vietnamese are still suspicious of 'capitalist companies' PHOTOGRAPH: HOANG DINH

The Chinese are believed to have repeatedly warned the Vietnamese against taking the intentions of the western nations, and in particular the US, at face value.

Despite the normalisation of Sino-Vietnamese relations in 1991, after 20 years of mutual hostility that culminated in a brief but bloody war between the two countries in 1979, the Vietnamese leaders still distrust China.

Moreover, Beijing can no longer lean on Hanoi in the way it was able to during the Vietnamese Communist Party's previous congress in 1991, when Politburo member Nguyen Co Thach, who had been foreign minister for a decade, was sacrificed on the altar of Sino-Vietnamese reconciliation. At that time Vietnam was isolated, which is no longer the case today.

But large sections of the party are still wary, for all that, of welcoming the Americans as though they were utterly disinterested partners. Many cadres have no intention of calling into question the economic reforms and opening up of the country which have produced the current boom. But, like the Chinese, they dread a dollar-fuelled "peaceful evolution" that could well transform the Americans' defeat on the battlefield 20 years ago into victory.

While keeping the lines of communication open with Washington, the communist leadership remains on its guard.

The dividing line between conservatives and reformers in the party remains blurred. For example, it has already been generally agreed that the ministries should be regrouped in the interests of efficiency, and that at the eighth Congress the secretariate of the central committee should be abolished, or at least stripped of many of its powers, on the grounds that two decision-making bodies (the Politburo and the government) already suffice.

The keenest champions of reform are believed to be the prime minister, Vo Van Kiet (number three in the Politburo), and the foreign minister, Nguyen Manh Cam. Both were elected to the Politburo in January 1994.

Leaks to the Vietnamese press in France have revealed the existence of confidential letters the two men are thought to have sent their Politburo colleagues, explaining why they wish to push ahead with reforms.

The party can do one of two things: it can reorganise itself, or it can, more prudently, decide to forge ahead in two phases, by announcing for example that the agenda of the congress will be complemented by a second national conference in two years' time.

Meanwhile, given that the country needs to define itself in relation to an outside world, which it often looks at through the same prism as China, the influence of its larger neighbour — the result of centuries of coexistence and a shared cultural heritage — is bound to prove crucial.

(January 23)

Paris sets out to restore its Pacific image

Florence de Changy in Canberra

THE Australian government this week set up an international commission on the elimination of nuclear weapons in the world. Its 17 members include the former US defence secretary, Robert McNamara, the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Joseph Rotblat, and the former French prime minister, Michel Rocard.

In the course of his work for the commission Rocard will be embarking, in a purely private capacity, on the difficult task of trying to refurbish France's image in the South Pacific after President Jacques Chirac's decision last June to resume nuclear testing there. The patching-up process will not, of course, be able to get fully under way until the test programme ends (reportedly at the end of February).

What most took the French by surprise last year was the virulence of the Australian reaction to the tests. But that reaction should not be allowed to obscure the fact that over the previous few years relations between Canberra and Paris improved spectacularly.

This was largely due to two events: the signature in 1988, under Rocard's premiership, of a peace plan for New Caledonia, and the 1992 announcement by the then prime minister, Pierre Bérégovoy, of a moratorium on nuclear testing. This new aspect of French foreign policy enabled Franco-Australian relations to become "better than ever", in the words of the Australian trade minister, Bob MacMullan.

The damage that has been caused by the resumption of nuclear testing is moral rather than economic. France's reputation has been tarnished. As a Sydney-based French businessman puts it: "It's most definitely in bad taste to serve French champagne at receptions."

However, when the state of Franco-Australian trade is looked at, the picture is not nearly so bad. The number of visa applications for France has not decreased. Nor has the volume of French investment in Australia flagged.

Major bilateral co-operation deals have not suffered from the cooling of relations between the two countries. The French embassy reports that it has never had so many requests for partnership deals or applications for study grants. The number of pupils in Australia's four French schools has gone up.

As regards joint sea rescue and maritime surveillance operations by the French and Australian authorities in the South Pacific, "nothing has changed", according to an Australian diplomat, Stephen Henningham.

The alarmist talk, commonly heard in some Parisian circles, about an "Anglo-Saxon plot" to "kick France out of the region" has more to do with fantasy than fact. Such sentiments overlook a major new aspect of Australia's demographic pattern: people of "Anglo-Saxon" origin now account for only 60 per cent of the population, whose composition has been profoundly changed by successive waves of new immigrants since the last war.

The "plot" theory also fails to grasp the nationalist dimension of Australian antinuclear feeling, which was probably more directed against the British than the French themselves once the British prime minister, John Major, had come out in support of Chirac's decision.

Those who believe in a "plot" also overlook the high degree of Francophilia that has led many senior Australian civil servants to train in France. "Of the 12 people who took part in our daily meetings devoted to the issue of nuclear tests, seven or eight spoke French, and three had been students at ENA [Ecole Nationale d'Administration, the French college for high-flying civil servants]," says a senior official in the foreign ministry.

It is this Francophilia that has been so seriously dented by the nuclear test episode. It will be no easy task to put matters right. According to Kim Jones, deputy secretary at the department of foreign affairs and trade, and a former Australian ambassador in Paris, it will take "several years" to restore the climate of mutual trust that existed between the two countries until the fateful announcement of June 13.

(January 25)

France sticks to its nuclear energy policy

EDITORIAL

THE future of nuclear power worldwide appears to be hanging in the balance. Its prospects looked rosy 20 years ago when steep rises in oil prices left the western nations in a state of shock as they came to terms with the dreadful possibility of a serious and lasting energy shortage.

Yet by then the atom was no longer perceived as the miracle solution promised by scientists in the 1950s. There were even beginning to be doubts about the safety of nuclear installations. But it was a question of getting priorities right, and there was no denying the simple fact that 100 grammes of uranium could produce as much energy as a tonne of oil.

Programmes to build nuclear power stations were launched in all the developed countries. The result today is that 431 reactors in 44 countries provide 5 per cent of world energy needs, while 34 others are being built in France, Japan, Russia and Ukraine, as well as in fast-developing countries, such as China, South Korea, Pakistan, Indonesia and Taiwan. Even so, the nuclear industry now seems to have passed its heyday.

Since the accidents at Three Mile Island (United States) in 1979 and at Chernobyl (Ukraine) in 1986, public opinion has proved powerful enough in Germany to bring its nuclear programme to a halt: 28 of the 40 planned power stations have been built. The situation is similar in the US, whose 110th power station is now unlikely ever to see the light of day.

In their fight against nuclear power, environmentalists have recently had the support of certain financial experts, who have revised their profitability calculations. Under pressure from the City, the British government has thus postponed the privatisation of its 16 existing nuclear power stations and decided not to build any more.

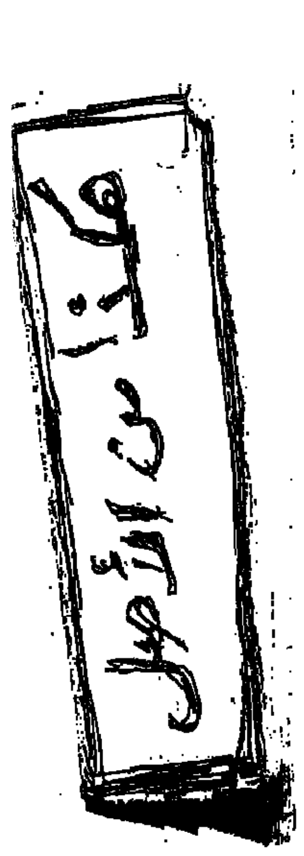
The main reason for this U-turn has been the fall in the cost of fossil fuels and the discovery of new deposits, which means they will not run out as soon as was originally thought.

This brings up the fundamental question: was it and is it still a good idea to continue banking on nuclear energy? The clear answer is no.

But France, the country with the second-largest number of reactors in the world (56), seems impervious to such arguments.

The authorities have denied there is any need for a public debate about the wisdom of maintaining such policies. It is high time they changed their minds.

(January 24)





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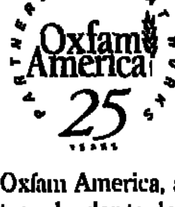
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For application form and job description please phone / fax Jeremy Davies, National Co-ordinator, VETAID, CTVM, Easter Bush, Roslin, Midlothian, EH25 9RG, tel/fax (0044) 0131 445 3129.

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For more information contact Sarah Goff, Department of Sociology & Social Policy, University of Durham, Elvet Riverside, New Elvet, Durham DH1 3JT, UK. Tel. + 44 191 374 2310; e-mail s.e.goff@durham.ac.uk

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The successful candidate will be required to work closely with other members of the research team and also to liaise with engineers from industry. The ideal candidate will have experience at postgraduate or an equivalent level in electronic drives (especially induction motor drives). Candidates with a good knowledge of induction machine control, PWM strategies and real-time microprocessing will be preferred.

Salary will not exceed £15,986 pa. The post is available for a period of 21 months.

Informal enquiries may be addressed to Dr G M Asher, tel: +44 (0) 115 951 5545 or Dr K J Bradley, tel: +44 (0) 115 951 5558

Applicants should send a detailed CV, together with the names of two referees, to Dr G M Asher, Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering, The University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD. **Closing date: 23 February 1996.**

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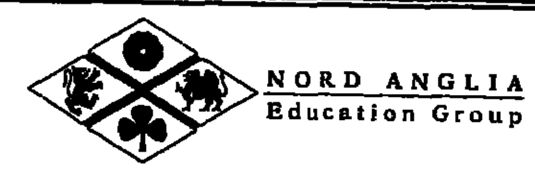
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Declaring war on war itself

In his first newspaper article since winning the Nobel Peace Prize, **Joseph Rotblat** argues that to end the danger of nuclear genocide we must renounce war

Here then is the problem which we present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable. Shall we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war?

THIS WAS the question posed in 1955 in the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. It was not a rhetorical question. It was put at that time because of the realisation that, with the development of the hydrogen bomb and ballistic missiles, human beings became an endangered species.

The extinction of the human race could result from a natural event, for example a collision with a comet or meteorite or an exceptionally violent volcanic eruption. Such a phenomenon was probably responsible for the extinction of the dinosaurs. But the fact that this cataclysmic disaster occurred some 60 million years ago, and none of such magnitude has apparently happened since, means that for all practical purposes we can put it out of our minds.

That such a catastrophe could be caused by the action of man was never considered seriously. History is full of attempted genocide. The gravest occurred this century: the Nazi programme of systematic elimination of whole categories of people, for no other reason than they were members of certain races. But there were no technical means for omnicide. The advent of nuclear weapons has changed all this.

The chief characteristic of the nuclear age is that, for the first time in history, man has acquired the technical capacity to destroy his own species, and to accomplish it, wilfully or accidentally, in a single action. The enormous significance of this situation is yet to sink in, it seems. We continue with our squabbles, which often lead to war, ignoring the danger that minor disputes may escalate into large-scale hostilities, and eventually to a nuclear confrontation with catastrophic consequences.

Back in the fifties, the superpowers responded to the question in the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, not by renouncing war but by trying to make it impossible through the policy of "mutually assured destruction".

It is widely believed that deterrence worked; it appears to many to have brought stability during the cold-war period. But this is a grand illusion. There was no military stability; what we did have was a furious arms race. At no time was either of the superpowers satisfied with what it had in its arsenal. Throughout the period, scientists on both sides of the Iron Curtain kept on inventing new gadgets to make their own weapons more effective and those of the enemy more vulnerable. The result was an obscene accumulation of weapons: at one time reaching 70,000 nuclear warheads, 100 times more than was needed for deterrence. Even this was not enough to ensure security, and Ronald Reagan felt obliged to embark on the Star Wars project, a defensive umbrella which would have led to more offensive weapons being deployed.

There was an even chance, in my opinion, that a hardline leader would resort to the use of nuclear weapons in a desperate move to end the conflict. Fortunately, a sane man came on to the scene: Mikhail Gorbachev — influenced in part by the debates in Pugwash meetings — called a halt to the arms race, and saved civilisation.

At present the danger of a nuclear confrontation is greatly reduced, but it is still there. The nuclear states still adhere to the deterrence policy, which is bound to lead to more countries seeking the security which the United Kingdom and others say that the possession of nuclear weapons provides.

The only way to prevent this is to get rid of all nuclear weapons. There is indeed a growing realisation among the general public, as well as political and military leaders, of the need to create a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The initiative of the Australian government to set up the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons is evidence of this trend. Paul Keating announced the Commission last November, as the first serious study of its type directly supported by a government. It deserves the support of the British government.

Should these efforts succeed in bringing about a treaty to outlaw the possession of nuclear weapons, the world would be a safer place, but not completely safe. The knowledge of how to make nuclear weapons cannot be erased. Even in a nuclear-weapon-free world, should the great powers become involved in a military confrontation, they would be tempted to rebuild nuclear arsenals. Moreover, other means of wholesale destruction may emerge from science. The human species will never be safe again, and we come back to the alternatives in the Russell-Einstein Manifesto: the end of the human race or renunciation of war. Since the first is unacceptable, war must cease to be an admissible social institution. The abolition of all war must be our ultimate goal.

To abolish war we need to create a new mind-set. We have to convey to the peoples of the world the message that the safeguarding of our common property — humankind — calls for developing in each of us a new loyalty, a loyalty to mankind.

Interestingly, the practical means for this are provided by science itself. The fantastic progress of science and technology has made this globe very small. We have all become close neighbours. Thanks to the tremendous growth of air travel, an ever-increasing number of people from different countries meet each other. The development of satellite communications enables each of us to know instantly what is going on in any part of the world. By the use of computer network systems we can talk to each other; further advances in computer technology will overcome the language barrier. All of us, all inhabitants of the globe, are becoming like one family. But we still have to recognise this fact consciously and acquire a loyalty to mankind.

Loyalty to a group is an essential element in civilisation. A group, in which individual members fulfil specialised tasks, has a much better chance of achieving prosperity and security than if each individual fends for himself. It is in the interest of all members of the group to work in unison. Hence, loyalty to the group is essential. In the early history of civilisation the group was small, a family, but gradually — with increasing specialisation — a number of such groups combined, linked by some common characteristic; new loyalties were superimposed on the original ones, an extension rather than a replacement of previous loyalties.

With increasing interdependence of people, largely arising from technological advances, ever larger groups evolved, leading to the nation. This is where it has got so far. Loyalty to one's nation is at present supreme, overriding the loyalties to other groupings. But now, when the whole of mankind needs protection, we have to extend loyalty beyond the nation.

At a time when the action of a single nation may endanger the whole of civilisation, it is imperative to develop, and recognise consciously, even formally, loyalty to the whole of mankind. We must learn to think of ourselves as citizens of the world. The survival of humankind can no longer be taken for granted. It should be our conscious goal as we approach the new millennium.

Professor Joseph Rotblat won the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize for his work with the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs to abolish nuclear weapons. He is in Canberra now with the Commission for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, which will meet three or four times before reporting to Paul Keating by August 31, 1996. The Australian government then intends to submit its report to the UN General Assembly and Conference on Disarmament

CLASSIFIED



Risky caper . . . Samantha Brewster and the route she took round the Horn PHOTOGRAPH: PETER BENTLEY

Brewster has a Southern cross to bear

Bob Fisher

SAMANTHA Brewster rounded Cape Horn, the first of the markers in her attempt to sail non-stop around the world from east to west, last week. She was 18 days out from the Brazilian port of Santos, where she had been forced to stop for repairs to the mast of her 67ft steel yacht Heath's Insured.

In a message to her shore base she said: "Having rounded the Horn it feels like I have only just started. It's as if from October 29 to now has been from the 10-minute gun to the starting gun. The race has only just begun."

There will be none of the controversy that surrounded Lisa Clayton's round-the-world voyage: Brewster's route has been carefully monitored by the World Sailing Speed Record Council from the outset.

In a radio-telephone call when she was 50 miles from the rocky outcrop at the bottom of South America she had told of the luck she was enjoying as she headed for the Horn. "The wind is light and from the east; everybody knows it should be strong and from the west."

It meant Heath's Insured was running on port tack rather than slamming into headwinds. Brewster knew it would not last and she had cleared the spinnaker gear from the deck. "I did that as I went through the Strait of Le Maire. I didn't think I would be needing it for some time but I regret that as I could be using it right now." It did not stay that way, as she told her shore base a minute after passing the Cape: "I'm tacking and reefing; westerlies have arrived."

On her passage south she had sailed to the west of the Falklands, often in fierce headwinds of up to 45 knots. It was a foretaste of what she can expect for the best part of the next three months as she battles across the Southern Ocean.

Brewster, who has covered 2,500 miles, faces 80 days of loneliness, broken only by her radio reports home, before her next landfall at the Cape of Good Hope.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***WHAT IS* a continent? Is Europe a continent or just the western part of the Asian landmass?**

EUROPE and Asia have been welded together for at least 300 million years. Geophysically, continents are defined by the thickness and composition of their crust, which (unlike oceanic crust) is silica-rich and thick. There are seven patches of continental crust, but it makes sense to subdivide them where they are cut by tectonic plate boundaries, because the fragments are in relative motion.

This makes 14 continents in all: Jan Mayen, the Rockall Plateau, the Agulhas Plateau (south of South Africa), the Seychelles, New Zealand, Antarctica, South America, Central America, North America (including a large chunk of Siberia), Eurasia, Australia, India, Arabia and Africa. — *Graham Cogley, Professor of Geography, Trent University, Peterborough, Canada*

***MEMBERS* of the royal family are regularly seen wearing military decorations, even if they have seen no action. What have they done to deserve them?**

THE MEDALS are: MC — Marital Crisis; VC — Visiting Carling; DSM — Don't Snap Me! DFC — Doesn't Fancy Charles. All were awarded in conflicts with the paparazzi. — *Neil Stubbs, Tarporley, Cheshire*

***WHY* does my stubble grow faster when I travel by plane?**

JUAN BELMONTE — matador de toros — used to comment that on the afternoons of a *corrida* his stubble would grow quite quickly. He attributed this phenomenon to fear of the bulls.

However, if we are to believe the results of the research mentioned by John Miller (December 10) then perhaps Belmonte was subconsciously thinking of the *après corrida*. — *Roy Gittings, Huasco, Chile*

***WHY DO* human male voices "break" at puberty?**

BECAUSE at puberty the male voice box (behind the Adam's apple) doubles in size in only about one year. Furthermore, the different parts of the voice box do not increase at the same rate or to the same extent.

This temporarily confuses the brain of the speaker who has to work out a somewhat different set of commands to the throat muscles in order to produce a good adult voice. — *Colin Painter, Otolaryngology, Washington University, St Louis, Missouri, USA*

Any answers?

WHAT* is the origin of the offside rule in soccer? If it ever had a function, does it still serve that function and is it ever reviewed? — *Peter Nicklin, Newcastle upon Tyne

IN CAIRO* my wife and I saw at night a ring of light around the moon about 10 moons in diameter, the ring itself being about one moon wide. What was the cause of this phenomenon? — *Bernard O'Kane, Cairo

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

Letter from Mauritania Philippa King

More the merrier

I THOUGHT I'd finally made it with my Mauritanian friends when I announced that I was going back to my home country to get married. Having frustrated, confused or insulted them for years by refusing all the offers of sons or husbands who would be happy to put me out of my perceived misery, I'm finally doing "the right thing". At last I am safe from nagging — but for one thing. "Now you'll put on some weight . . . If your mother was here, she would take you to the desert and force you to drink milk until you were fat enough to get married." In this culture "fat" is a synonym for "beautiful", as far as women are concerned, and I happen to be tall and thin — although as I try to remind myself, it would be "nice and slim" by western standards. I've lost count of how many times I've imparted the incredible news that in Britain many women go on diets in order to be as thin as they can on their wedding day. Even more incredible than the shocking revelation that western brides willingly go away with their new husbands after the wedding. "Have you no shame?" gasped a wide-eyed Fatma.

Fatma's eldest brother got married not long ago, and she and her sisters took it upon themselves to hide the bride from him after the wedding. I didn't see much of the bride at the wedding party, since she was required by custom to wear a black veil dalek-style over her face, and remain silent apart from occasional sobs. I didn't see much of her at Fatma's house either, even though I live there too, but I couldn't miss the groom and his friends, stomping in and out demanding his wife, while the girls tried to look innocent. He became more and more angry as the days went on and the joke wore thin.

The idea is for the bride's friends to make a fool of her new husband, and they certainly succeeded this time. One evening Fatma dressed in the bride's indigo veil while the bride, a 15-year-old called Ama, disguised herself as a man. Another night she was hidden in a neighbour's bathroom. Finally he managed to fight his way through her giggling bodyguard and whisk her away to his house, to the sound of much ululation. It turns out that he had to go to sea only a couple of days later for a three-month voyage. I suspect his sisters knew all along, but still had no mercy.

Sometimes I wonder why so much fuss is made of weddings when it seems 90 per cent of them end in divorce. But for a woman to have any status in this society, she must at least have been married, and preferably have children to show for it. In fact, the more husbands she has had, the higher her status. One woman I met claimed her ambition in life was to be "fat, white, and five times divorced".

ONE RICH neighbour is an important leader in an Islamic sect, which explains why, I was told, he never has a woman without marrying her. He has four wives at a time, and replaces one every few months, or sometimes weeks. The latest was, like many of her predecessors, the ultimate in beauty by Moor standards: big and soft and pale-skinned. She was about 15 years old, illiterate and had come straight from the desert. Her new friends were laughing at her naive reactions to the cars and bathrooms she'd seen in the town, so I was a little shocked when, seeing the television and video, she inquired if I had any pornographic films she could borrow. Did she know what they were? Apparently so; she explained that she wanted to know what to do to please her husband, so she wouldn't be the one he divorced the next time he fancied "something fresh".

Although Islam allows four wives to men who are rich enough to look after them all, the Moors rarely have more than one at a time, albeit a short time. On the other hand, the black-African peoples of Mauritania practise polygamy, if they can afford it. There is much debate about the merits of polygamy versus divorce. "If he takes another wife without divorcing you, it must mean he loves you." "If he loved you, he wouldn't take another wife." The unanimous conclusion?

"Men! By God, I spit on them all!" And they wondered at my reluctance to marry.

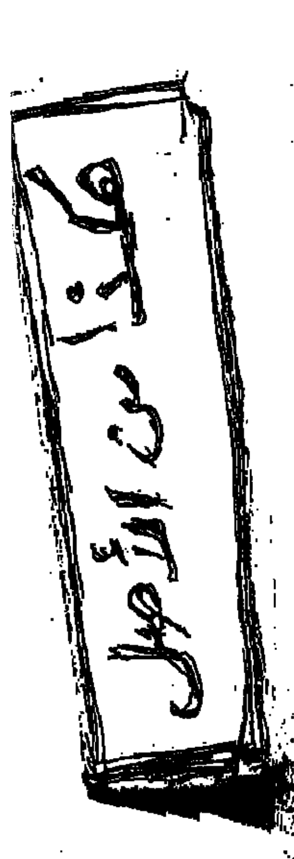
A Country Diary

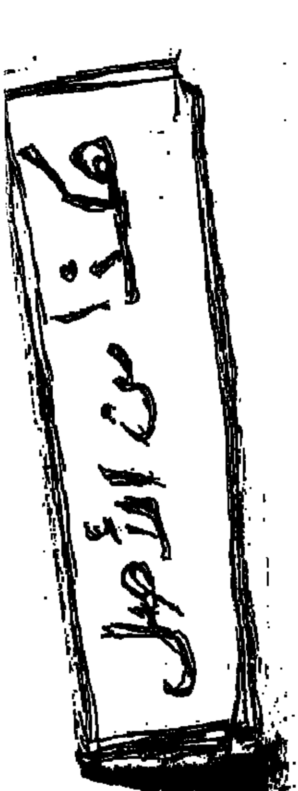
J M Thompson

ARGENTINA: With a land area of 2.8 million sq km, and stretching 3,500km from north to south, Argentina is the eighth largest country in the world, almost the size of India. On a four-week tour, we travelled between the small Andean town of Abra Pampa high up on the Altiplano in the north-west, down to the southernmost tip at Ushuaia — "world's end" on Tierra del Fuego, passing through subtropical rainforest, high-altitude deserts and high-latitude steppes, humid temperate grasslands, alpine and sub-Antarctic forests and rugged coastal cliffs.

Conscious of the need to preserve these sensitive environments, Argentina has created an extensive system of national parks, one of the first in Latin America, dating back to the turn of the century. We stayed in a number of these protected areas during our visit, each with its own range of habitats and distinctive occupants — the majestic condor patrolling the high peaks of the Andes and the wild vacuna on the puna below; toucans in the Iguazu rainforest; whales, elephant seals and magellanic penguins around the Valdez peninsula; and black-browed albatrosses following our boat down the Beagle Channel.

If I had to choose one lasting memory from so many it would be my first encounter with a glacier in Patagonia. One of the few glaciers in the world that is still advancing, it has been created over thousands of years by snow, compacted under tremendous weight, re-crystallising into ice and flowing eastward through the Fitzroy range of the Andes. Its visible face is 60 metres high, and to stand on the boardwalk beside it, listening to the creaks and groans, then the sudden explosion as a large chunk collapses, is as much an audible as visual experience.





What a scorcher

CINEMA
Jonathan Romney

EVERY now and then, you see a film that's indisputably special, but for none of the obvious reasons. It may not seem to attempt anything new, it may not have a particularly good script or outstanding performances, it may seem insubstantial by conventional standards. Yet somehow it demands that you make a leap of faith and admit that, yes, this really is cinema. Michael Mann's **Heat** is just that. Seen as the sum of its parts, it's just a big, slow cop thriller; taken as a bold, sprawling whole, it's some sort of a masterpiece.

At a time when the young turks are bending thriller conventions every which way, Mann takes genre commonplaces as a given and restores them to peak form. Heat is an existential thriller — the robber robs, the cop pursues and neither has the time for any kind of inner life. This sort of story can come across as paper-thin comic-strip stuff, but here it takes on a resonant grandeur.

What makes Heat as much an event as a movie is that it teams Al Pacino and Robert De Niro, American cinema's two raging bulls turned sacred cows — and that's all the high-concept pitch it needs. De Niro is the quietly ruthless loner behind a series of high-profile robberies; Pacino is out to get him.

But the style of the pursuit is everything. For a start, there's the pace — painstakingly strung out, but never dragging. Mann intersperses spectacular bursts of action with tense stretches of dead time, long stalking periods that make us feel as if we're taking part in a relentless stakeout.

Mann's masterstroke is to have his two leads barely meet. They only occasionally come together — either to stare each other out or, in an extraordinary central scene, to exchange terse challenges over coffee.

Both men are lost figures in a forbidding landscape. The cop is drawing painfully away from his wife while the hood embarks on a seemingly doomed romance with a designer. The domestic scenes are the weak point of Mann's script, but they underscore the bleakness of the film's real romance between two men.

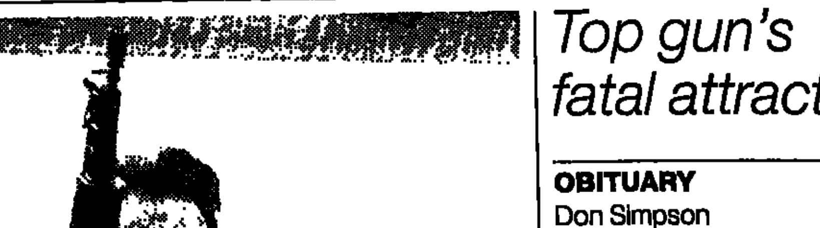
The whole conception of Heat is in a sense musical — it's all about orchestration. The central performances themselves are not quite virtuoso: Pacino is as bullish and stentorian as ever, while De Niro folds into the background as the professional Invisible Man. What matters is the way the two are counterpointed, and if the other characters don't entirely register as solo turns, it's because they're used as parts in the symphonic back-up: a self-effacing, brutish Val Kilmer, an alarmingly weathered Jon Voight, and the excellent, pithy Ashley Judd.

Described this way, Heat may sound rather abstract and formalist, and it is — but it's no less gripping for that.

Some film-makers reach a point where their work is so idiosyncratic that you can no longer describe it in the terms that first seemed to apply. It might once have made sense to talk about Pedro Almodóvar in terms of camp and kitsch, but his work has so much become its own genre that those terms are now as redundant as trying to account for Buñuel's work by calling it surreal.

Not being a paid-up Pedrophile, I can't help feeling that his films have become hermetic, and although **The Flower of My Secret** takes a slightly different tack, he's still in his own private Madrid. The tone is less frantic than usual. Leo (Marisa Paredes) is a romantic novelist on the edge of a nervous breakdown. Her soldier husband is permanently away at war zones, and her publisher wants more servings of pallid pulp instead of the cherished personal creation she's delivered — a lurid tale of sex and squalor that sounds like a typical Almodóvar plot.

Where Almodóvar has previously gone in for sexual anarchy, this is an almost realistic tale of mid-life agony — like an episode of Crossroads dressed up in art-house couture.





Pacino . . . as bullish and stentorian as ever

You could read the story as an allegory of the director's dilemma — everyone wants him to churn out chic pop shockers, when perhaps he'd rather make films about real feelings. But it's hard to see any genuine emotional substance here, possibly because we're so used to Almodóvar defusing any hint of seriousness.

Waiting to Exhale is the long-awaited film that black women can bond over. Based on Terry McMillan's novel, it's something like an African-American answer to The Joy Luck Club — equally episodic, equally celebratory of its four heroines' ordinary triumphs, but considerably more saccharine. The only fire comes when Angela Bassett incinerates the contents of her husband's walk-in closets — some 50 suits, which makes quite a blaze. Bassett is the strongest presence of the four; Whitney Houston is just blandness incarnate.

Top gun's fatal attraction

OBITUARY
Don Simpson

THE DEATH of Hollywood producer Don Simpson at the age of 52 is almost a parody of eighties Tinsel Town, the brash decade that brought him overwhelming success and wealth but not the ability to deal with them. The odyssey which took him from a modest home in Anchorage, Alaska, to a mansion in Bel-Air, Los Angeles, cost him his life. He was addicted to drugs and over-indulged in the demi-monde of the $2,000-a-night call-girls supplied by his close friend Heidi Fleiss, the Hollywood madam.

The police and his lawyer insisted that the producer had apparently not died from a drug overdose. The emphasis on death by natural causes was understandable. Last summer, in a scene reminiscent of S.O.B., Blake Edwards's Hollywood spoof, Simpson's personal doctor and friend was found dead at his home from overdoses of cocaine, morphine, Valium and Venlaxafine, an anti-depressant.

It was this kind of life that gave the edge to one of Simpson's biggest hits, the Beverly Hills Cop series. With his partner, Jerry Bruckheimer, he also produced billion-dollar successes such as Top Gun and Flashdance, and more recently Bad Boys, Crimson Tide and Dangerous Minds.

After Oregon University, Simpson worked his way up the Paramount Pictures hierarchy, helping to make hits such as American Gigolo, Urban Cowboy, An Officer And A Gentleman and 48 Hours. His partnership with Bruckheimer marked the zenith of independent entrepreneurs in Hollywood at a time when the studios had handed over their power to agents and "package" fixers.

They were named "producers of the year" by the National Cinema Owners' Association, and the Publicists' Guild made them 1988 "showmen of the year". Simpson received 10 Oscar nominations and the partners' prominence brought them a deal with Paramount to make five films of their choice. The arrangement collapsed after the first one, Day Of Trust, flopped.

They then moved to Disney and, after an uncertain beginning, made big money. In 1983 they confounded their critics with the box-office success Bad Boys, a melodrama about a juvenile prison that some denounced as exploitative and amoral.

Simpson was unabashed and continued to force his way to the top despite the addiction that eventually estranged him from Bruckheimer. He ignored friends' advice to take clinical treatment and was about to announce the formation of his own solo production company and a new association with Disney when he died.

Christopher Reed

Donald Simpson, film producer, born October 29, 1943, died January 19, 1996

Panorama with clouds massing on horizon

INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL
Derek Malcolm

DESPITE being regularly accused in the press of every bureaucratic folly, India's only international film festival, a movable feast which travels from centre to centre each year, attracting huge audiences, has survived under government tutelage for 27 years.

But almost as soon as the 1996 version began in Delhi there were rumours, confirmed by government ministers, that it was soon to be privatised. However, no one appears to want to take over an expensive event that for so long has brought world cinema to India and shown the best Indian films to foreigners.

The fact is that the Indian film industry has worries of its own and doesn't want the job, even if it were capable of doing it. It is difficult to imagine the producers of Bollywood spectaculars in Bombay or musical melodramas in Madras bothering with the more arcane productions of world cinema in their enclosed world, where production comfortably outdoes Hollywood — at the last count, in 1994, 750 films were certified. And especially since their main worry is about the liberalisation that now allows the American industry free rein in the country and is slowly but surely beginning to eat into their profits — Jurassic Park was a huge success in India.

This year the Delhi festival tried something different. It produced a competition for Asian women directors and an international jury headed by France's Jeanne Moreau to present a prize to the winner.

It turned out to be the Iranian Rakshan Bani-Etemad's **The Blue Veil**. The story of a widower farmer and a young woman working for him who can't marry because of class differences, it was the best of a group of Iranian films presented in Delhi with some flourish.

Elsewhere, the international section caused the usual furore when sex reared its unfamiliar head. But most hysteria was caused by Shekhar Kapur's **The Bandit Queen**, finally allowed an Indian release with only minor cuts after being successfully shown in the rest of the world.

Kapur, who has fought a long legal battle with Ms Devi, the real-life bandit queen, in order to get it shown, arrived on the stage with the lady herself now in support, having been paid a considerable sum to still her objections. Now married and edging towards a political future, she told the audience that everything had been amicably resolved, though she still didn't wholly approve of parts of the film.

This certainly seemed the most obviously striking of the Indian films on view, though Saeed Mirza's **Naseem**, an eloquent and moving family drama set in the time of the Muslim-Hindu riots in Bombay in the early nineties, ran it pretty close.

Mirza's story of a young Muslim girl and her bed-ridden grandfather who survive the violence and hatred, is never melodramatic and its quiet compassion and gentle skill makes Naseem worthy of a wider showing than just in India.

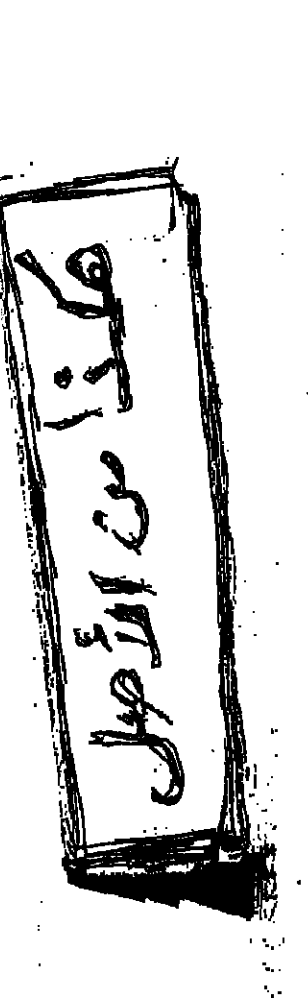
Outside an otherwise rather lacklustre Indian Panorama — India's independent film-makers have even more difficulty than most getting into their country's cinemas — there was an unofficial showing of **Kathapurushan** (Man Of The Story), the eagerly-awaited new film from Adoor Gopalakrishnan, generally considered the one Indian director able to take over the mantle of the great Satyajit Ray.

Two things unite the film-makers. The first is that they both lived in the only two states governed by the communists, and both are masters of a rigorous style through which they tell their stories.

Man Of The Story's tale is rooted deep in Kerala politics and culture, progressing from the decade before independence in 1947, past the assassination of Gandhi into the eighties. In 1957, the first democratically elected communist government took power in Kerala, the Maoist Naxalite uprising of 1968 attempted to undermine it, Mrs Gandhi declared a state of emergency throughout India and, finally, the Left Political Front came back to power.

The film traverses all this, tracing the often tumultuous change in Kerala from an agrarian and caste-ridden society to a modern elective democracy through the life of a young middle-class man living on his family's crumbling estate. Stuttering and timid, he is a leftist at odds with his family who eventually finds release as a writer.

The film is brilliantly constructed as a parable about its time, and its formal grace and sure command betoken a world-class director. Gopalakrishnan again proves himself the outstanding talent among the so-called Parallel film-makers — those who refuse the rigid conventions of the commercial cinema and for whom Ray was a guru.



On Cupid's trail

An unnoticed Michelangelo has been discovered in the centre of New York, writes **John Ezard**

KATHLEEN BRANDT had passed the little Cupid umpteen times. It stood in shadow in the foyer of a building a few doors from the office where she has worked since 1969.

Then one day she happened to see the statue bathed in light. "Yipes," she said. Last week the Cupid, battered and chipped, stood bathed in media lights. Professor Brandt, a leading specialist in Italian Renaissance art, has identified it as a lost Michelangelo.

It had been there unnoticed on New York's Upper East Side for 40 years, while the cream of the city's art world trouped by for champagne and caviare, courtesy of the French government, which uses the building for cultural receptions.

It is neither the first nor the last discovery of its kind in the history of art. The late dealer and art historian David Carritt clinched a world-wide reputation as an art detective in the 1960s. He had been thumbing through an old catalogue of Tiepolo and noted a ceiling that had been described and then referred to as "lost". How could anyone lose a ceiling, he wondered, and read a bit more, and noted that the banker who owned it had lived for a while in London.

More out of amusement than anything else, he started leafing his way through the directories of the 18th century, working on the sensible principle that there could not be an indefinite number of "great houses" that might play host to a late-master ceiling. He checked, he probed, he groped, he wheedled invitations, and he eliminated. In the end, the only place left to check was the Egyptian Embassy. He found an excuse to see the ambassador, looked up, and there it was. The delighted owners promptly sold the painting at Christies in 1969, and the National Gallery acquired its first large-scale example of Tiepolo's work.

The embassy's failure to recognise a Tiepolo might be understandable. But how could scholars — especially Professor Brandt, who has advised the Vatican on restoring Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel — miss for so long a work by a man regarded as, along with Beethoven and Shakespeare, one of the three master-artists of human history?

The harsh answer, as William Mostyn-Owen, a former director of Christies' picture department, reflected in London last week, is that it is a fallacy to think that beauty automatically shines out into the eye of the beholder. For most people the perception of beauty is simply a reflex conditioned at least partly by education and cultural fashion.

"You could see a really wonderful piece of sculpture in a railway station and no one would recognise it, because they would not expect it to be there."

A striking example of the "don't know, can't see" syndrome happened at Alnwick Castle, where an exquisite Raphael, the Madonna With The Pinks, lay forgotten in a corridor, cracked and discoloured, banished from pride of place in the ducal collection because of an earlier misattribution. It was only reclaimed for posterity when a curator from the National Gallery noticed it as he was conducted between rooms of "serious" paintings.

Professor Brandt's command of the Sistine murals would not necessarily have helped her with the Cupid. Mostyn-Owen draws a sharp distinction between expertise on "flatties", his word for paintings, and on "feelies" or "roundies" as he calls sculptures.

"Sculptures tend to have been taken overseas centuries back and to have ended up at the bottom of a garden covered in ivy or moss until somebody cleans them. It's a tricky field — but it's encouraging to think that there is always something there to discover."

There is undoubtedly still a lot of great lost or unrecognised work waiting to be found. Recent prime finds include Donatello's Madonna and Child, now at the V&A, and Giambologna's Fata Morgana, which is in private hands. But in both these cases, the key to discovery was close reading of old documents rather than Professor Brandt's kind of educated luck.

Michelangelo's Cupid: an unlikely recent discovery in Manhattan

The Giambologna, a naked marble woman rising from the waves, turned up at a rural Christie's sale of garden statuary and furniture in 1989. It was classified as "quite ordinary 18th century marble". But a London scholar-dealer, Pat Wengraf, was reminded by the catalogue description of an Italian document dated 1575, mentioning it soon after it was made to embellish a grotto in the grounds of a Florentine villa owned by the sculptor's chief patron and friend.

One glimpse of the statue clinched the identification for Wengraf, though not at the time for other experts. Along with other dealers, she bid for it and she still owns it. "It was a terrific feeling when I first realised what it was," she says. "I wish I could get that feeling more often."

The Donatello discovery stemmed from a mission begun in the late sixties by a former V&A director, Sir John Pope-Hennessy. He sent a curator, Ronald Lightbown, to Venice to find out more about a 15th century doctor, Giovanni Chellini.

Lightbown unearthed a memoir by Chellini showing that as thanks for saving his life he had given the doctor a plate-sized bronze roundel with a Virgin and Child. A few years later the roundel surfaced in the United States — it was being used as an ashtray. It came on the market in 1975 and, after a public appeal, the V&A managed to buy it.

As for the Michelangelo Cupid, a few questions have been raised over its authenticity. What we do know is that, in 1906, it was sold to Stanford White, architect of the Fifth Avenue town house where the statue was found, as a freshly unearthed Italian "antique". It had in fact already been offered in auction in London as a Michelangelo. In 1968, an Italian art historian published an article speculating as to where it was. If only he'd looked a little harder.

But what will it go for? When the Giambologna was first identified, a price tag of £5 million was rumoured. The Cupid, however, will no doubt be beyond price. It is after all the only Michelangelo in North America.

Passionate protest written in blood

THEATRE
Michael Billington

NAOMI WALLACE'S Slaughter City, premièred in The Pit at London's Barbican, is a strange and compelling play that unites two elements in the American tradition — the radical and the mystic.

On the radical level, the play is a passionate protest against exploitation. Set in a meat packing plant, it shows workers hosing down pigs' heads, pulling loins, sweeping offal. And Wallace makes it clear that, in a deregulated market, people work longer for less, have neither contracts nor unions and are at the mercy of bosses. Here the autocratic employer, Mr Baquin, alternates between cruel humiliation and token paternalism involving out-of-hours fitness classes and environmental projects. This, implies Wallace, is the reality of American labour today.

But her play is no simple exhortation to strike. What complicates her work is that she takes on board issues of race, gender and the interaction of past and present. At the centre of her play is the sexually ambiguous figure of Cod, who works in the meat packing plant, urges the workers to action and who turns out to be the daughter of a textile worker who jumped to her death in an industrial fire at the turn of the century. Wallace mixes reality and dream. Her larger point is that the flame of radicalism represented by Cod must never die.

The play has passion, poetry and a wild strangeness. Wallace also writes highly effective individual scenes. In one, Cod gives a boy worker a lesson in political reality by using a canteen tray as a metaphor and demonstrating how, without a unionised structure, the



Lisa Gaye Dixon and Alexis Daniel in Slaughter City PHOTO: TRISTRAM KENTON

employees turn into a handful of slops. And in another scene the self-same junior, who lusts after a black colleague, is allowed to kiss her only when he sheds his macho pride and dons a woman's dress.

Running through the play is the Whitmanesque idea that sexual and economic liberation are inseparable. And Ron Daniels's production is astonishingly successful at welding them together. In Ashley Martin-Davies's design the meat packing plant is both grimly actual and a metaphorical hell. And, among the cast, Olwen Fouere is rivetingly androgynous as the metamorphosing Cod, with strong support from Sophie Stanton as a besotted colleague and Lisa Gaye Dixon as a militant black packer. Most cheering of all, however, is Wallace's adventurous attempt to redefine political drama in terms of a feminist surrealism.

Exuberant ear-opener

MUSIC
Andrew Clements

EVEN by the lavish standards of the BBC's winter weekends at the Barbican in London, the celebration of Charles Ives was an ambitious, highly complex affair. There may not have been operas to perform in concert, or works with elaborate electronics to project around the hall, but Ives's music makes its own demands on performers. They are not purely technical; instrumentation that includes zithers, jew's harps and an obsolete electronic instrument called the theremin takes organising, as do all the spatial effects, the offstage bands and choruses, that are just as essential a part of his imaginative world.

All this, though, was triumphantly stage-managed and the celebration ended with the Fourth Symphony, the most demanding and ambitious of his works, and the one in which all his aspirations and his experimentalism are most majestically affirmed. Andrew Davis conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra in the massive peroration, with two assistant conductors to control the offstage instruments and anarchic percussion. There was no doubt of the scale of Ives's achievement.

Between the relatively familiar fixed points the concerts — eight of them, as well as lectures, films and foyer events — ranged into much more obscure areas. There were works from Ives's student years at Harvard, pieces that have been reconstructed from fragmentary sketches and, most fascinating of all, some of the small-scale experiments that reveal the sheer exuberance and fertility of Ives's mind, his compulsion to carve out a musical language that is utterly original and utterly American.

In the United States his importance is unchallenged, but in Europe he remains a shadowy figure, probably because his music is so exclusively home-grown. The emotional resonance of a revivalist hymn or a marching band doesn't carry the weight for Europeans that it still does in the American folk memory, yet that was the raw material for Ives's most extraordinary achievements — the uproarious gallimaufry of sounds in Putnam's Camp, the second of his Three Places in New England, or the ghostly assemblage of Civil War tunes in Decoration Day, the second movement of the Holidays Symphony, which Davis conducted in the opening concert.

Where the European modernists in the first decades of the 20th century forged their revolution using the traditional musical elements of pitch, rhythm, harmony, Ives used the vernacular. Ninety years on, it remains remarkable, ear-opening stuff. What the BBC weekend demonstrated most of all was that it was not the work of a mere musical inventor, someone who was combining these unlikely elements for the sheer hell of it.

His output may have been uneven but his best work was the product of a fearsomely acute musical mind fully in control of its material, bent on producing music that would reflect his native culture and philosophy and always striving for transcendence.

Swing both ways

George Melly

Vice Versa — Bi-sexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life
by Marjorie Garber
Hamish Hamilton 606pp £25.99

I MUST admit that, knowing nothing of Dr Garber's earlier work, the prospect of reviewing a monumental examination of one aspect of sexuality by an American woman academic failed, initially, to set my pulse skipping. For a moment, the terrible phantom of Shere Hite materialised in my memory, floating about like Ophelia at Elsinore, her fingers simulating inverted commas around the words "female orgasm" at 15-second intervals. I was mistaken. Within a paragraph, Hite had floated off downstream and I realised that I was in for a treat.

Professor Garber would appear to be humorous, pleasure-loving, anti-dogmatic and learned. From Euripides to the obscure, butch, transvestite blues singer Gladys Bentley is quite a jump, yet she never shows off for its own sake. Every fact is relevant to her grand design, every opinion justified by fact.

Her main contention is that bisexuality has often been and still is deliberately suppressed and marginalised. She sets out to expose this calumny, largely on the grounds that it places an artificial limit on our erotic choice and nature. She cites, naturally enough, those moments in history, Greek civilisation in particular, when the love of the same sex was considered the norm, but opposes, here as elsewhere, those subsequent homosexual takeover bids whose aim is to discount the bisexual's enjoyment of the opposite sex.

She dismisses with scorn the widely held and much propagated view that anyone declaring themselves bisexual is either gay but hasn't realised it or, more culpably, is hiding behind "heterosexual privilege". Nor is this special pleading confined to sexuality. Garber doesn't hesitate to anatomise those minorities who, having fought with justification for their rights, adopt all the bullying tactics of their erstwhile prosecutors.

The author is aware of (and very amusing about) "bisexual chic" and its use by celebrities to reinvent themselves. Elton John, David Bowie and especially Madonna are recent examples. Sarah Bernhardt and Marlene Dietrich used the same device too. But celebrities are not ordinary people. We want and need them to bend or break rules. What there isn't, for a non-celebrity, is any means to manifest his or her bisexuality, no identifying style. This invisibility of the bisexual is a handicap in claiming equal status with other, more visible segments of the sexual spectrum.

Furthermore, the nineties are different from the seventies. "Borderlines are back: ethnic, racial, religious and sexual-minorities assert their visibility and, thus, their power." bisexuals have no visibility and therefore no power.

YET, at bottom, Garber rejects and despises these sexual civil wars. To shore up the centre of her credo she quotes her ally, Gore Vidal. In 1979, he wrote, "There is no such thing as a heterosexual person. The words are adjectives, describing sexual acts, not people . . . The human race is divided into male and female. Many human beings enjoy sexual relations with their own sex, many don't, many respond to both. The plurality is the fact of our nature and not worth fretting about." If only it were all so simple.

At one point, Garber cites a chat show where a participant coming out as gay was cheered, while another declaring himself bi was booed. Since Aids, homosexuals, isolated among their own kind, may be viewed with sympathy, even admiration; bisexuals are seen as criminals, creeping out to roll in the gay trough and then sneaking back to infect their innocent wives and children.

The demonisation of the bisexual is an easy option, which the author equates brilliantly with the vampire myth. It is, however, necessary to examine it without hysteria, a task which Garber undertakes with scrupulous care. The public myth demands a married "hidden" bisexual male who, on his excursions into the promiscuous gay world, takes no precautions. It ignores female bisexuals.

For the rest, the book is a delight. The essays on historical bisexuals — many of which she has had to wrest back from gays or, in the case of Shakespeare, priggish idolaters — are first-rate. She's wonderful on D H Lawrence and Henry James, and equally good about pop phenomena and film.

As to her own position, she has a "close, intense, long-term relationship with a woman, with possible brief sexual encounters with men and women with whom I do not get emotionally involved on the side". She realises this may seem odd, but it suits her. "I'm reasonably happy for now," is how she puts it. She is after all — and what a relief it is — no Utopian.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life, by Andrew Ross (Verso, £12.95)

CANT infects areas of public discourse that we look upon with approval, as well as those we disdain: while (I assume) we all approve of ecological awareness, we should be on our guard against assuming either that we now have all the answers — or that the answers provided are the right ones. "Judgments, models, and arguments from nature are usually always derived from society," says Ross (despite the clumsy conjunction of the words "usually" and "always"): "This is something that does not go without saying." A pugnacious, sometimes uncomfortable book (and sometimes mordantly funny), an overview of green concerns by a deeply sceptical cultural critic, which should make us think twice about the voguish platitudes we accept as sops to our troubled consciences. "Liberal" is a vaguely dirty word here, but not from a neo-conservative viewpoint. Ross's knee jerks less automatically than anyone else's, which is why liberals would do well to read it, even if only to disagree.

Living In Oblivion/Eating Crow, by Tom DiCillo (Faber, £8.99)

THE COMPLETE script of the film about the trials of making a low-budget film, along with a diary relating the real-life problems of raising money and finding a distributor. A total success: the script reads beautifully, and the diary (itself a hysterical mixture of petulance, vanity and fear) adds to the nimbus of giddy self-enactment that the film creates. He quotes Godard: "Critics are like soldiers who fire on their own troops," and adds, "I love critics more than life itself."

Novel Without a Name, by Duong Thu Huong (Picador, £5.99)

A HARROWING and poetic novel narrated by a soldier in the North Vietnamese army, entering his tenth year of "fighting" — that is, hunger, privation, fever, terror, and death. Gives the lie to western notions of the Cong as a remorseless, faceless and heartless fighting machine — and that the book has been translated into American English (which is fair enough) gives it a curiously unsettling resonance. Huong's works are, it almost goes without saying, banned in her native country.

Total Poker, by David Spanier (Oldcastle, £6.99)

ONE OF the odder books that the game throws up from time to time; veers between moments of great insight ("sometimes the odds will buck around and wallop you on the nose") and stretches of tedious exposition, with digressions on the poker skills of various American presidents (they were all pretty good, apart from Washington).

Shopgirl on a roll

Jenny Turner

Dear Dodie: The Life of Dodie Smith
by Valerie Grove
Chatto and Windus 329pp £20

I Capture the Castle
by Dodie Smith
Virago 342pp £6.99

BY THE summer of 1967, Dodie Smith had done plenty to make herself a prime candidate for Desert Island Discs. The 1930s she spent in giving the West End theatre hit after well-made sentimental hit. Then, in 1949, she produced the magnificent I Capture The Castle, the one mid-century novel fit to sit between Little Women and Anne of Green Gables on every romantically minded teenager's shelf. And then, in 1956, she spawned The 101 Dalmatians, a charming tale for kids which Walt Disney made into a super-sweet animated film. In 1967, Dodie Smith was 71 and thoroughly settled into a quiet life with her beloved husband, Alec. And yet, when the call came in from Roy Plomley, the dowager crowd-pleaser turned him down.

One new excitement had entered Dodie and Alec's reclusive rural life that summer. Its name was Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Everything "those Beatles" ever did, Dodie felt, was gloriously suffused with a general "love of mankind". So how dare the BBC ban A Day In The Life from the radio, just because the song was allegedly about drugs? Drug-taking, was but a phase young people go through, in the absence of any credible alternative through which to channel their religious impulses. So she refused to spin her discs until 1974.

Smith, playwright and novelist, flapper and free-thinker, was born into a middle-class home in Manchester in 1896. Her father died when she was a baby, and her adored mother followed him in 1914. Though barely 5ft tall, and rather plain she set about making a career for herself upon the London stage. She was terrible, apparently, but struggled on for a decade before abandoning the chorus-line for Heal's furniture emporium in London's Tottenham Court Road.

She then embarked on a swash-buckling career as a seductress of married men and she had only just finished "collecting" her furniture-magnate boss when a handsome [illegible] made it plain that he was besotted with her. Alec Beesley would go on to become Dodie's loyal helpmate until his death in 1987. She mourned him inconsolably until she died in 1990.

When Dodie's first play, Autumn Crocus, was given its West End opening in 1931, it was an overnight sensation. "Shopgirl Writes Play," ran the headlines, and the romantic comedy, marked out by Lord Chamberlain-defying risqué touches, went on to run for 10 months. So began a gilded decade for Dodie and Alec, hanging out with Gielgud in the Ivy and acquiring the ill-mannered, gammy-legged Pongo, the first of many Dalmatian pups.

But the 1930s ended, for Dodie as for Europe, in disaster. Instead of sticking out the war on the home front, she ran away to America, for the sake, she thought, of Alec, a life-long pacifist. The resulting guilt and bad faith destroyed her ability to hold a theatrical audience once and for all.

And yet, it was this period "in limbo", as she called it, that allowed her to germinate I Capture The Castle, a novel of high-spirited young-womanhood as glorious in its way as [illegible] Brontë, Smith was never an angry soul, nor an especially tormented one. So, although the book echoes its predecessor in its near-Gothic sense of dramatic symmetry, there is also something new and wonderful. "Dear me, dancing is peculiar when you really think about it. If a man held your waist without it being dancing it would be most important; in dancing, you don't even notice it — well, only a little bit . . ." And so, for perhaps the first time ever since the great Victorian clamp-down, we hear in Smith's novel the voice of a girl awakening to sexual possibility, not in fear or puritanical denial, but with a gloriously sly and curious delight.

Now that Virago has recaptured the castle of Smith's imagination for a new generation of Cassandras, it would seem only sensible to bring the fruits of her prodigious memory back into print as well. The Disney Corporation is even now preparing the release of a live-action 101 Dalmatians remake, starring Glenn Close as Cruella De Vil. Dodie Smith would have liked that. But to be remembered as the irrepressibly resourceful life-liver she so obviously was would, one imagines, [illegible]

Cruella De Vil: Dodie Smith's most enduring creation in Disney's super-sweet version of 101 Dalmatians

Poet against an empire

Joseph Brodsky

JOSEPH BRODSKY, who has died aged 55, was as gifted with words and the power of metaphor as any poet among his contemporaries, but the emergence of his gift at a particular time and place — he was born in Leningrad the year before German invasion — brought him other endowments.

He became the heir to the great tradition of modernism in Russian poetry, rooted in the moment early in the century when this was perhaps the finest poetry in the world. Anna Akhmatova in her passionate old age herself anointed him, saying she had heard nothing like his poems since Osip Mandelstam.

In one of his penetrating essays on Mandelstam, Brodsky talks about the older poet's "growing identification", in the twenties, "with the archetypal predicament of 'a poet versus an empire'." This was also the predicament of the young Pushkin; and, before he was 24, of Joseph Brodsky too.

His career up to that point had not been of the kind that won gold stars or opinions in official Soviet society. For a start, he had been born a Jew ("100 per cent Jew, with a tremendous reservoir of guilt"), the son of a naval officer who had been dismissed when he reached the most senior rank then permitted to Jews; this was in 1949, the year which saw the arrest and execution of the entire Leningrad party leadership. The son dismissed himself from school at the age of 15, read voraciously in the margins of various temporary jobs (one of them as a mortuary assistant at coroners' autopsies), and began writing at the age of 18, a crucial member of that generation and milieu he describes so warmly in one of the autobiographical essays in his prose collection, Less Than One:

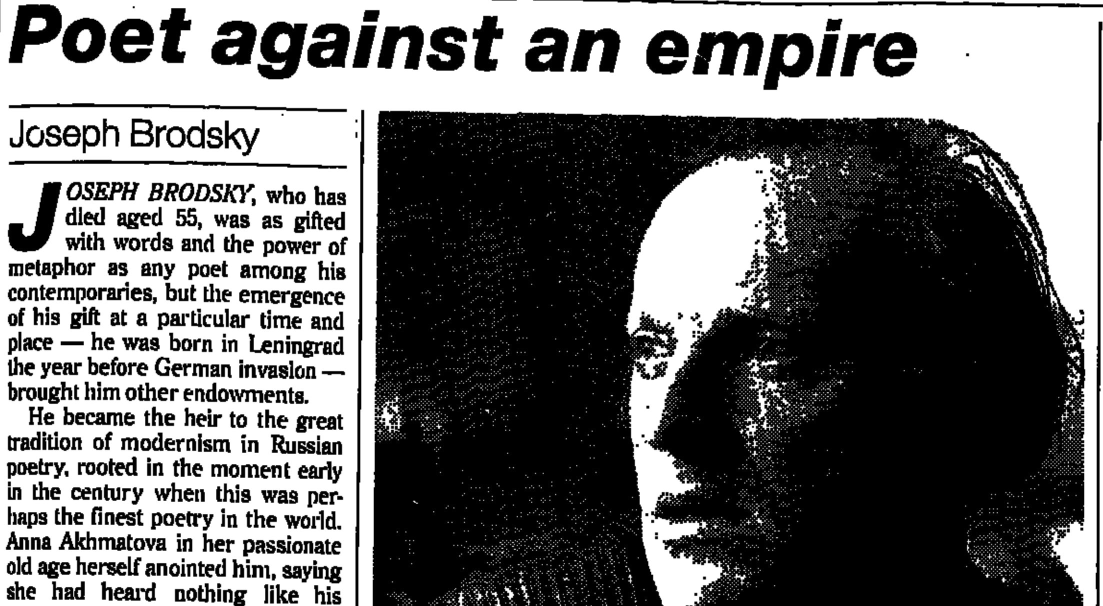
"Nobody knew literature and history better than these people, nobody could write in Russian better than they, nobody despised our times more profoundly. For these characters civilisation meant more than daily bread and a nightly hug. This wasn't, as it might seem, another lost generation. This was the only generation of Russians that had found itself, for whom Giotto and Mandelstam were more imperative than their own personal destinies."

He was taken up by Akhmatova and by his early 20s, reading at clandestine poets' gatherings, he had become the darling of a milieu where the natural Russian passion for poetry was again being pressure-cooked by censorship and repression.

The quality of the writing spoke for itself in such poems as The Great Elegy For John Donne, which dreams a sleeping 17th century London, a sleeping island, with the poet asleep under the dome of St Paul's, and his poems sleeping too:

The verses sleep. The stern iambi sleep.
The trochees sleep like guards, to left, to right
and in them sleeps a glimpse of Lethe's brook,
and something else beside it sleeping — fame.

Another glimpse of the young Brodsky shows him, when the in[illegible] was barely dry, reading this po[illegible] aloud *con amore* to his friend A[illegible]toly Naiman in a railway sta[illegible] booking hall, to the horror of the stolid ranks of Soviet citizens queuing for tickets.



'I am a poet' . . . Joseph Brodsky, who has died aged 55, was the heir to Russian modernism and the bitter tradition of persecuted writers

Inevitably this irregular patronage and fame, unauthorised by membership of the Writers' Union, unauthenticated even by a university degree, meant that he was soon taken up by critics of a different sort. In the days following the fall from grace of Khrushchev and his erratic de-Stalinising, the thought police of one kind and another, literary and administrative, reacted with predictable resentment to Brodsky's far from subdued display of talent and obduracy.

He was eventually arrested and finally brought to court on February 14, 1964 charged with social parasitism: since he wasn't a poet licensed by the Writers' Union or any other recognised authority, being a poet couldn't be held to be his gainful occupation, and by failing to take up any other, he was effectively a parasite or vagrant: QED.

By then, however, civil courage among writers and those who cared for literature and freedom, had advanced to the point that a full note of the trial was taken by a journalist, and soon got out to the West. It included the famous exchange with the judge that inscribed Brodsky's name in the roll of poet-heroes:

> **Exile did not, as the party police may have hoped, silence his troublesome tongue or weaken his spirit**

Judge: "What is your occupation?"
Brodsky: "I am a poet."
Judge: "Who recognised you as a poet? Who gave you the authority to call yourself a poet?"
Brodsky: "No one. Who gave me the authority to enter the human race?"
Judge: "Have you studied for it?"
Brodsky: "For what?"
Judge: "To become a poet. Why didn't you take further education at school where they prepare you, where you can learn?"
Brodsky: "I didn't think poetry was a matter of learning."
Judge: "What is it then?"
[illegible]*odsky*: "I think it is . . . [with evi[illegible] embarrassment] . . . a gift from [illegible]."

After a further three weeks among the actually mad and "officially mad" in a psychiatric clinic he was sentenced to exile with five years' hard labour on a remote state farm, but after less than two years, following pressure from Russian and foreign writers, he was released in November 1965, to return to Leningrad, in poor health but for the time being at least, in peace. The years that followed he spent partly learning Polish in order to be able to translate Zbigniew Herbert and Czeslaw Milosz, and English so that he could learn deeply from and translate Donne and Andrew Marvell (this poem The Butterfly is an extraordinary reincarnation and translation of the spirit of English metaphysical poetry). He also needed English to be able properly to read Auden, another hero among the older generation of living poets, who during the early years of his coming exile would be important to him in a new literary universe as Akhmatova had been in his native realm.

He was no longer crudely persecuted, though when an invitation was sent to read at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto in 1969, the Union of Soviet Writers replied on his behalf: "There is no such poet in Soviet Russia." Compared with the severity with which Sinyavsky and other writers were treated in the late sixties, Brodsky said, he had got off lightly: "Only two years. By Soviet standards it's positively homoeopathic." But in 1972 he again was obliged to lead the way in exile — this time out of the Soviet Union altogether, to be followed by Galich, Solzhenitsyn, Zinoviev, Maksimov, Voinovich, Nekrasov and Vladimov.

Two days after Brodsky arrived unwillingly in Vienna, all his manuscripts confiscated and impounded in the airport customs store in Moscow, he was in Auden's house at Kirchstetten. He was already in Auden's debt not least for helping to focus a notion that would be central to his own aesthetic with those lines about how time "Worships language and forgives/Everyone by whom it lives".

The old poet consoled him and "looked after my affairs with the diligence of a good mother hen," offering, to Brodsky's embarrassment, to translate him, and, more immediately invaluable, fixing a grant from the Academy of American Poets that would tide him over until he arrived at the first of his several American teaching jobs, at the University of Michigan.

Exile and separation from the language Brodsky identified with the deepest spring of the poet's and the nation's soul did not, as the party police may have hoped, silence his troublesome tongue or weaken his spirit. He had understood and declared himself to be an exile in his own land long before he was made to leave it, so he was not now "beheaded" by physical severance. As he put it in his acceptance speech when he was made Nobel laureate in 1987, it's not that language is the poet's instrument, but that he is its vessel.

If language was something like his god, separation made Mnemosyne his muse and consoling mate in his bereavement. Most literature is an art of memory, and all exiles are also sentenced to be memorialists, but the intensity of the gaze with which he conjured Leningrad's streets and buildings out of its Baltic marshland mists in poem after poem, and page after page of his prose, has more than a touch of the magus about it. In corners of cities everywhere, his sensitised eye found pieces of "Peter", as its natives were not to be dissuaded from knowing it: a gesture, a mood, a pediment, the limb of a statue. And passionately as he loves Venice, in his last prose work, Watermark, one often senses behind its celebrations of his love, the presence of that other, northern dream-world floating not in the Adriatic but the Baltic.

Like his abiding preoccupation with time itself, it reminds you of his master Mandelstam, whose Journey To Armenia, for example, another visit recollected in short "takes", is as full of metaphors that make your hair stand on end. And like Mandelstam too, with all his power of memory, Brodsky is eminently a poet of his present time, and a "renewer of language", as one of his best critics puts it, wrestling stoically with the bleak existential themes of the late 20th century, but also quickly getting to grips with the second, Anglo-American culture history has required him to take on. (He wrote his first poem in English, an Elegy on the death of Auden, in 1975.) "Growing old! Good day, my old age!" The poet and his poetry had been fighting the battle with time and death at least since the age of 32.

Time equals cold. Each body, sooner
or later, falls prey to the telescope. With the years,
it moves away from the luminary, grows colder.

But the gift of the Word grants a stay of execution and, if not immortality, an afterlife warmed by the spirit's aspiration:

. . . to God's least creature is given voice for speech, or
for song — a sign that it has found a way
to bind together, and stretch life's limits,
whether an hour or day.

The way in which the Word most signally defeats time (and other tyrannies, however), is by *remembering*:

"And there was a city", he wrote in the title piece of Less Than One, recalling his route to school along the Neva.

"The most beautiful city on the face of the earth. With an immense grey river that hung over its distant bottom like the immense grey sky over that river. Along that river there stood magnificent palaces with such beautifully elaborated facades that if the little boy was standing on the right bank, the left bank looked like the imprint of a giant mollusc called civilisation. Which ceased to exist."

W L Webb

Joseph Brodsky, poet, born Leningrad, May 24, 1940; died January 28, 1996

